ムサシ
MUSASHI #9

MIYUKI TAKAHASHI



14

The story so far...



The history of mankind has been one of wars
Relentless warfare would have doomed the planet to annihilation were it not for Ultimate Blue, a secret organization also known as the "other United Nations," and its team of super agents
Musashi Nine is one of them
Musashi goes undercover as Kou Shinozuka at an all-boys high school and smashes a criminal organization with Shingo Tachibana's help. Despite knowing they belong in different worlds, Shingo finds himself falling in love with Musashi. Musashi fakes her own death in an effort to end their relationship, but Shingo refuses to accept it and goes in search of her. With the help of #19, Musashi's adjutant, the two get back together and renew their love despite the difficulties. The two live together, but must constantly be on the move.
In this issue, the story goes back in time to #9 and #19's first mission together



#9 Musashi

An elite one-number U.B. agent. Was 13 years old when she first worked with #19. Gifted. Has nerves of steel.



Kathy

Only daughter of Howard Weekes, a U.S. senator leading the war on drugs. Goes to junior high school.



#19

Invited from Asia to try out as #9's double. Was 15 years old at the time.



#33

A girl also invited to try out as #9's double. Is cool under fire. Values teamwork.



#21

Also invited to try out as #9's double. Trained with #19. Very excitable. Was 20 years old then.



#23

Oldest at only 22 years old of those invited to try out as #9's double.

The history of mankind has been one of wars. Race. Religion. Philosophy. The causes are untold.

The combatants have their own justifications, but on occasion, some create a volatile situation that threatens to destroy the world.

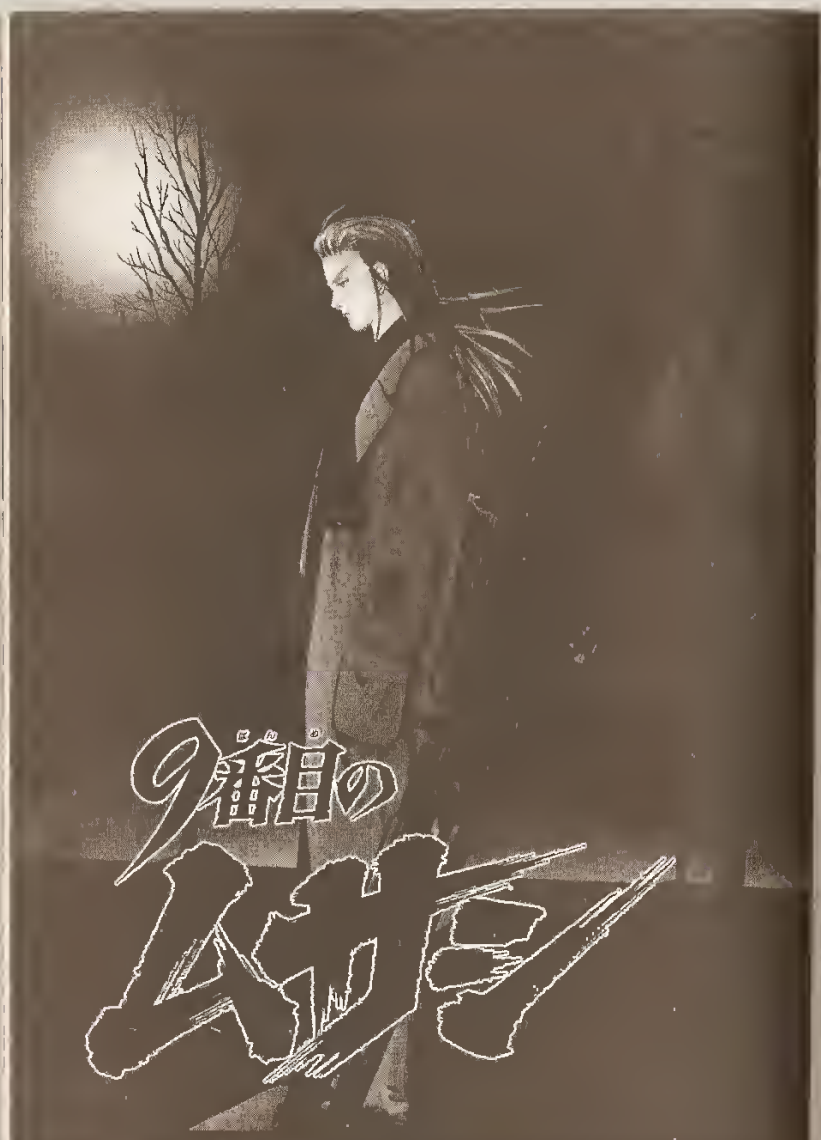


Ultimate Blue.

An organization shrouded in complete secrecy. Also known as "the other United Nations." Nobody knows when it was created. Nobody knows where it is based.

The Blue of the Seas.
The Blue of the Skies.
The Blue of the Earth.

The last line of defense against chaos.



Mission 25: Blue Beginnings

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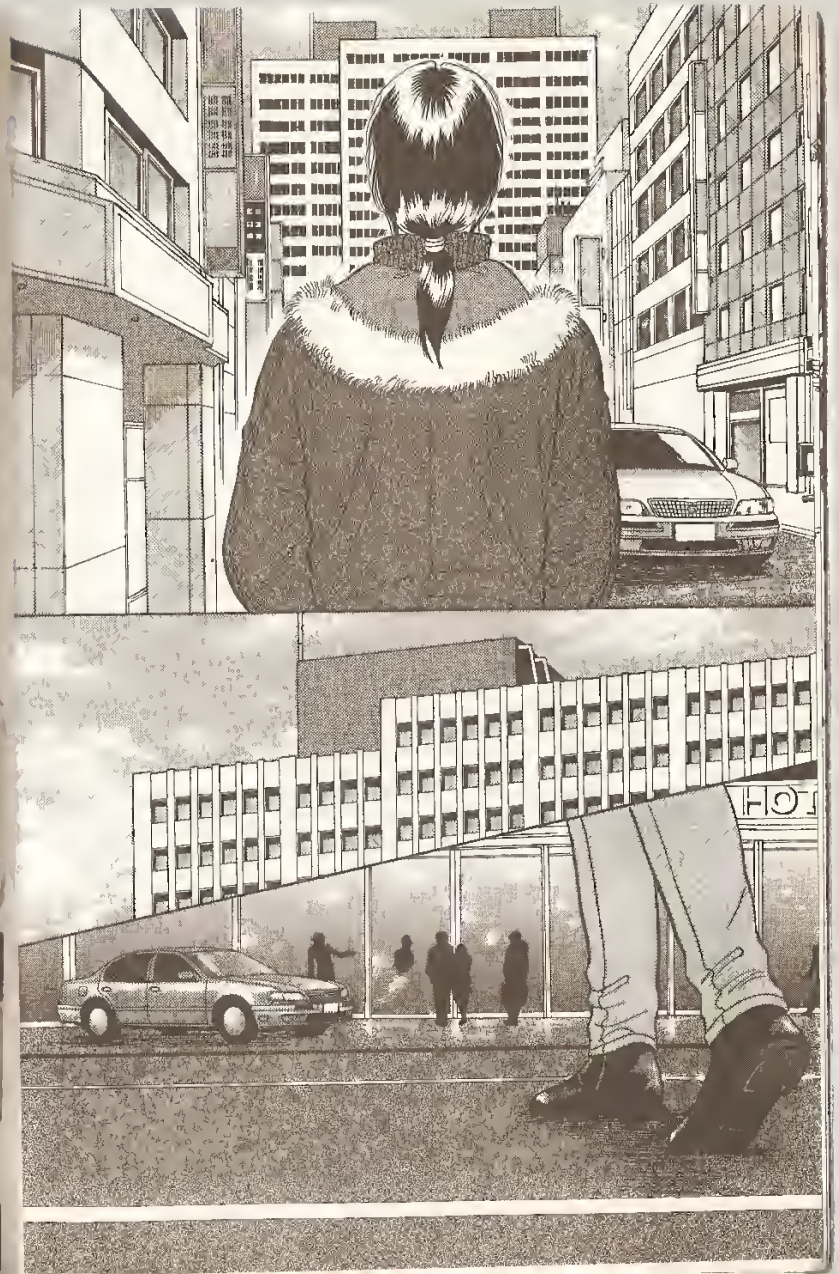


The icy touch of rain.
The gentle caress of the wind.
The vastness of the sky.
Love.

Life is beyond talent or wealth.

And to appreciate it, you have to live it.


OH?
NOT GETTING ON, SIR?
THANKS ANYWAY.
I'M WAITING FOR SOMEONE.
TICK TICK
DIIIIIING
THOT




CLICK
HOW ARE THE EGGS DONE?
YOU DIDN'T ORDER EGGS.
WHAT DO YOU HAVE FOR ME?
SALAD, TOAST, ORANGE JUICE, AND COFFEE.
KNOCK KNOCK
GOOD MORNING. ROOM SERVICE.
YOUR BREAKFAST, SIR.


GAAAAAA
GWEEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE
DING

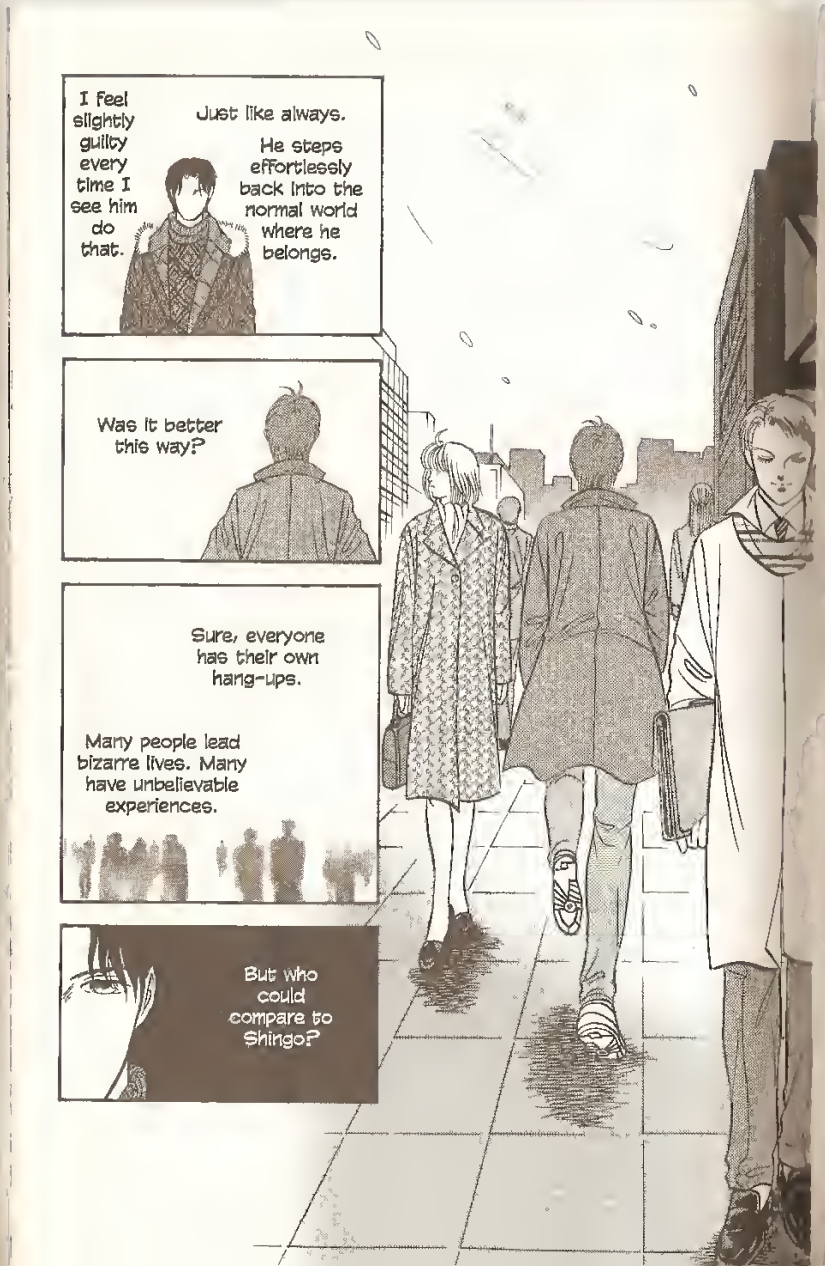

4511
GOOD TO SEE YOU, ONE-NINER.
HIYA, SHINGO.
IT'S BEEN A WHILE.
A BIT BORIN' THOUGH.
I HEAR YOU.
SHUT
CLICK
YEAH, MORE OR LESS.
IS EVERY-THING COOL?
HEY, I'M NOT COMPLAINING.
IT'S JUST THAT I'D RATHER EARN MY OWN KEEP, YOU KNOW?
RIGHT NOW, U.B.'S PAYING ALL THE BILLS.
BELIEVE ME, WE'D LIKE TO SET YOU UP IN BETTER PLACES.
THE RITZIER HOTELS HAVE BETTER SECURITY, BUT IT'S SAFER HERE. THESE ORDINARY PLACES DON'T ATTRACT MUCH ATTENTION.
LIVING IN HOTELS IS HARD ENOUGH.
BUT WE KEEP MOVING YOU BEFORE YOU CAN EVEN GET SETTLED IN.


I'M SORRY, BUT THAT'S THE WAY IT IS.
LOOK, I KNOW IT'S HARD ON YOU, BUT NINE HERSELF PICKS THE SPOTS.
SHE'S SO WORRIED ABOUT YOU SHE SENDS ME TO CHECK UP ON YOU WHEN SHE'S ON A MISSION.

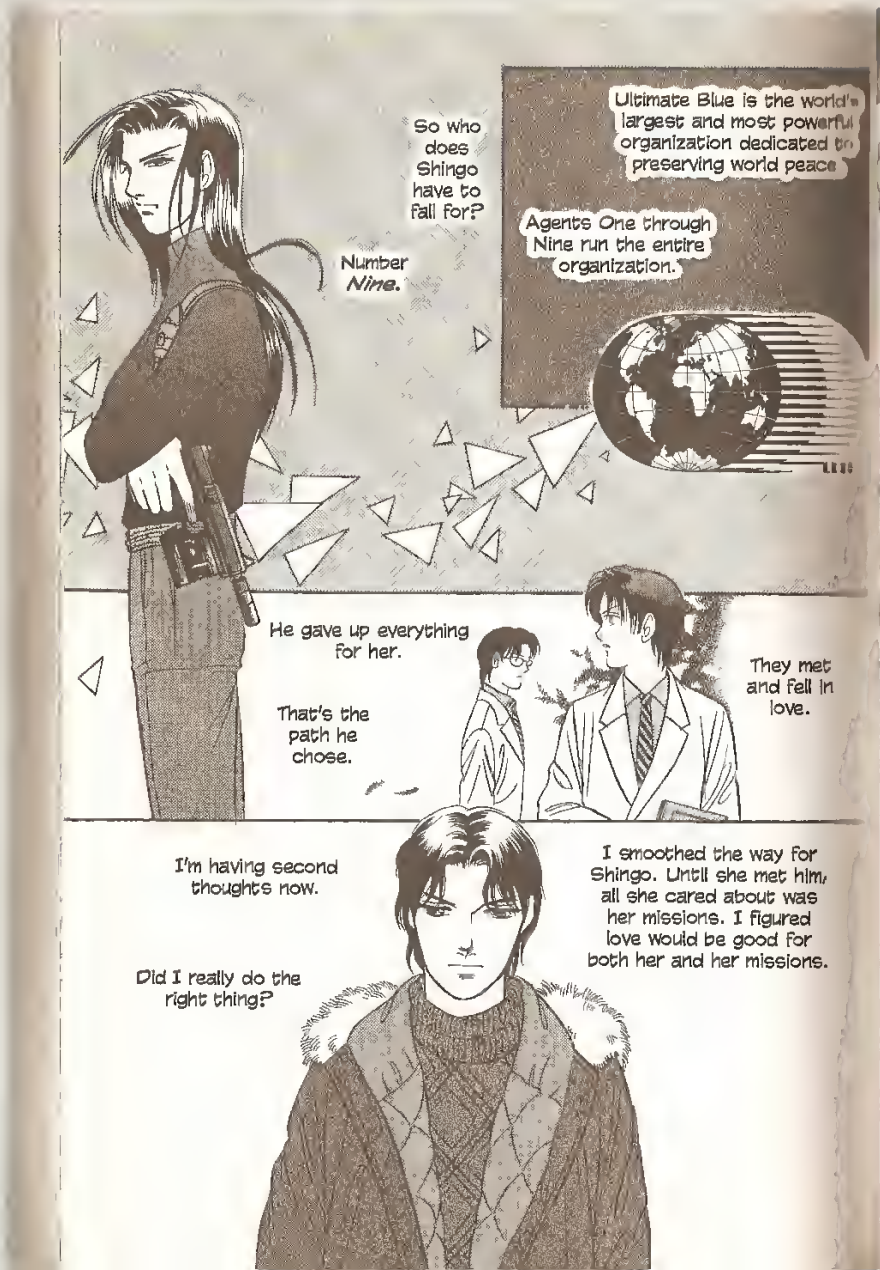

AND ONE MORE THING.
I CHOSE THIS FOR MYSELF. IT'S JUST THAT I'M NOT USED TO HAVING EVERYTHING PAID FOR.
I DON'T WANT MUCH.
I'LL BE HAPPY SO LONG AS SHE COMES BACK OKAY.
LIKE I SAID, I'M NOT COMPLAINING.
I'M SERIOUS, YEAH?

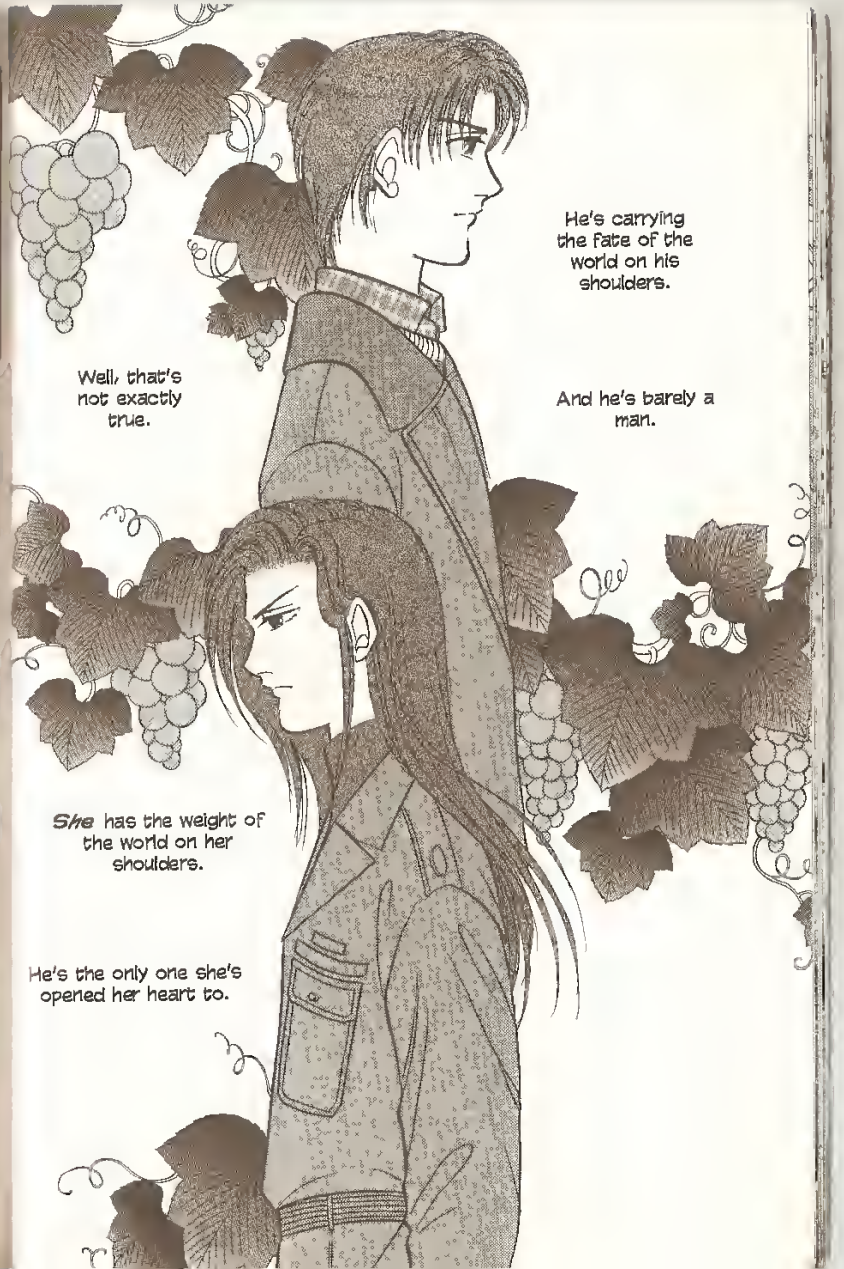

LET'S GO.
THAT'S NOT --
LET'S GO OUTSIDE.
IT'S PRETTY WARM OUT THERE. IT'S A NICE DAY FOR A WALK.
BUT --

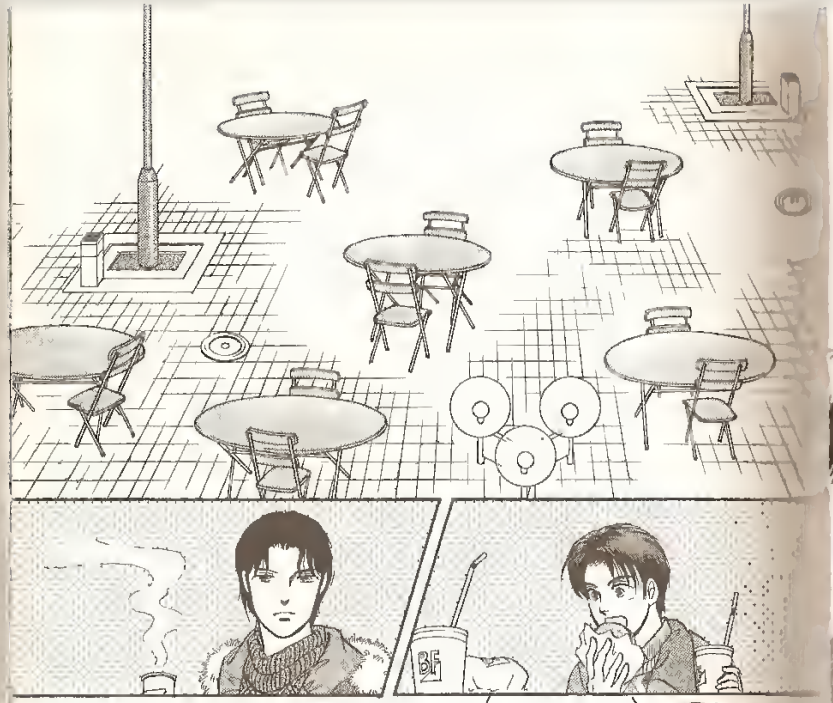



I feel slightly guilty every time I see him do that.
Just like always.
He steps effortlessly back into the normal world where he belongs.
Was it better this way?
Sure, everyone has their own hang-ups.
Many people lead bizarre lives. Many have unbelievable experiences.
But who could compare to Shingo?


I KINDA LIKE BEING IN THE CITY.
YOU NOTICE HOW QUIET IT IS EVEN WITH ALL THESE PEOPLE?
NO ONE EVEN STOPS TO LOOK AT ME. I LIKE THAT SORT OF FREEDOM.
Oh, Shingo...
IT'S NOT AS IF THE ENTIRE CITY'S COMPLETELY LIKE THIS, THOUGH.
URRRR
ARG! I'M STARVING!
YEAH.
SO STAY PUT.
I'M GONNA GET US SOME-THING TO EAT.


So who does Shingo have to fall for?
Number *Nine.*
Ultimate Blue is the world's largest and most powerful organization dedicated to preserving world peace.
Agents One through Nine run the entire organization.
He gave up everything for her.
That's the path he chose.
They met and fell in love.
I'm having second thoughts now.
Did I really do the right thing?
I smoothed the way for Shingo. Until she met him, all she cared about was her missions. I figured love would be good for both her and her missions.


He's carrying the fate of the world on his shoulders.
Well, that's not exactly true.
And he's barely a man.
She has the weight of the world on her shoulders.
He's the only one she's opened her heart to.




MAN, THIS PLACE IS DEAD ON A WEEKDAY.
EVERY-ONE'S PROBABLY AT WORK OR SCHOOL.
STILL TRIPPIN'?! HERE! EAT! THE FRIES ARE BETTER WHEN THEY'RE HOT.
UH... YEAH. RIGHT.


EARTH TO ONE-NINER! COME IN, ONE-NINER!
SPACIN' OUT OR WHAT? YOU'RE HERE, BUT YOU AREN'T.
OH, SORRY.
THERE'S A GOOD SPOT OVER THERE.


What kind of life is that?
It would've hurt, but only temporarily. Maybe they *should've* gone their separate ways.
Their lives are too different.
Maybe I should've kept Shingo out of this.
Maybe they're sacrificing too much in the name of love.


Honest.
Just.
Kind.
Forgiving.
Who knows how many people he's helped?
The guy's extremely resilient.
Very little fazes him.
Oh, that's right.
I'M NOT TOO KEEN ON U.B. FOOTIN' ALL THE BILLS.
A man's got his pride, you know?
HMMM...
He sacrifices himself without even realizing it.
Are all "ordinary" citizens this tough?
It really gets you thinking.
I'M REALLY GLAD YOU'RE THERE FOR HER.
I WAS JUST THINKING.
It's no wonder Nine fell for him.
IT'S NOTHING.
WHAT ARE YOU GAWKIN' AT?


I HAVE A GIRLFRIEND.
SHE'S COMING BACK SOON.
THINK ABOUT IT.
THE WEATHER'S GREAT, AND HERE I AM SOAKING IT ALL UP.
I'M THE ONLY ONE WHO HAS IT SO EASY.
EASY?
IT'S CHOICE!
WHO COULD ASK FOR MORE?
THERE IS ONE THING, THOUGH.
SLURP
MY LIFE'S NOT THAT BAD. AND IF SOMEONE COMES AFTER ME, I'LL WORRY ABOUT IT THEN.
YOU ALWAYS HAVE TO STAY OUT OF SIGHT.
YOUR LIFE'S ALWAYS IN DANGER.
EVEN THEN?
YOU SURE?


SHE WAS SERIOUS ABOUT YOU.
I FOUND OUT JUST HOW SERIOUS THEN.
BREAK-ING UP WITH YOU, THAT IS.
IF YOU SAY SO.
MIND YOU, SHE KNEW IT WAS A MISTAKE.
OH, RIGHT.
YOU KNOW EVERYTHING ABOUT HER.
COME ON. I'VE BEEN HER DOUBLE FOR YEARS.
NAH. I COULD JUST TELL.
DID SHE SAY SO?

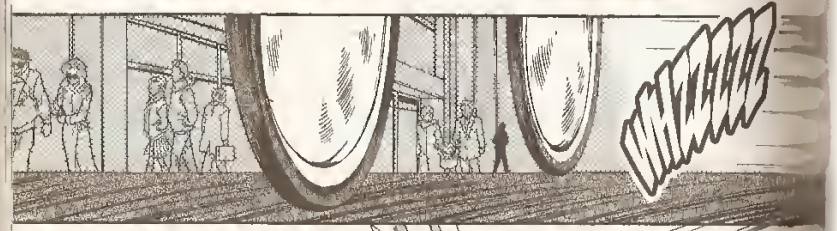

I'M GRATEFUL YOU DID. I REALLY AM.
SCRATCH SCRATCH
AH... YEAH.
YOU DID HELP US HOOK UP AGAIN.
I HAVE TO ADMIT I WASN'T SO SURE AT FIRST.
HEH HEH
TOSS TOSS
WHOA! WHAT WAS ALL THAT ABOUT?!
BUT NOW, I THINK IT'S WORKING OUT REALLY WELL.
REMEMBER WHEN YOU TOOK ME TO WHERE SHE WAS?
I SWEAR, DUDE, IT WAS LIKE A DREAM COME TRUE.
IF IT WEREN'T FOR YOU, I'D STILL BE LOOKING FOR HER.

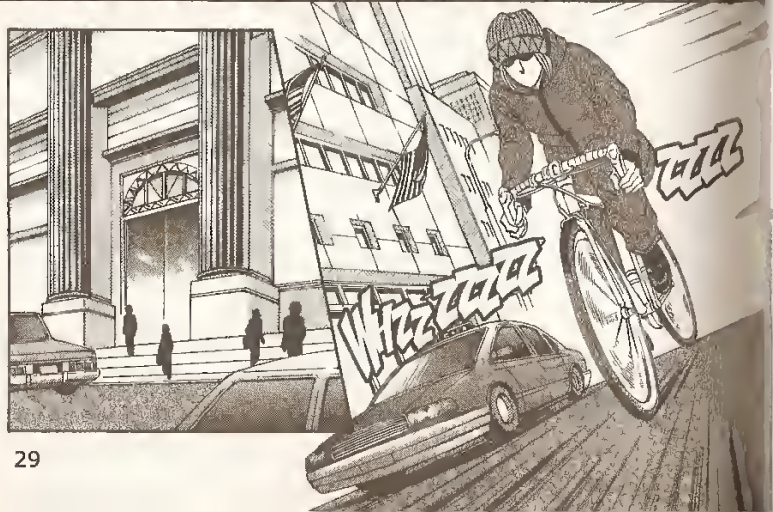

ANYWAY, I WAS 15 YEARS OLD.
ULTIMATE BLUE NEEDED STAND-INS FOR NINE.
OUR OUTFIT ISN'T CONCERNED ABOUT AGE, GENDER, OR NATIONALITY. YOU OF ALL PEOPLE SHOULD KNOW THAT BY NOW.
FIFTEEN?!
I WAS NO DIFFERENT.
EVERY ONE OF OUR AGENTS DREAMS OF BEING A DOUBLE FOR AN ELITE, ONE-NUMBER AGENT LIKE NINE.
I HAD TO GO THROUGH COUNTLESS TESTS. SEVERAL PEOPLE, INCLUDING ME, WERE LEFT FOR THE FINAL TEST.

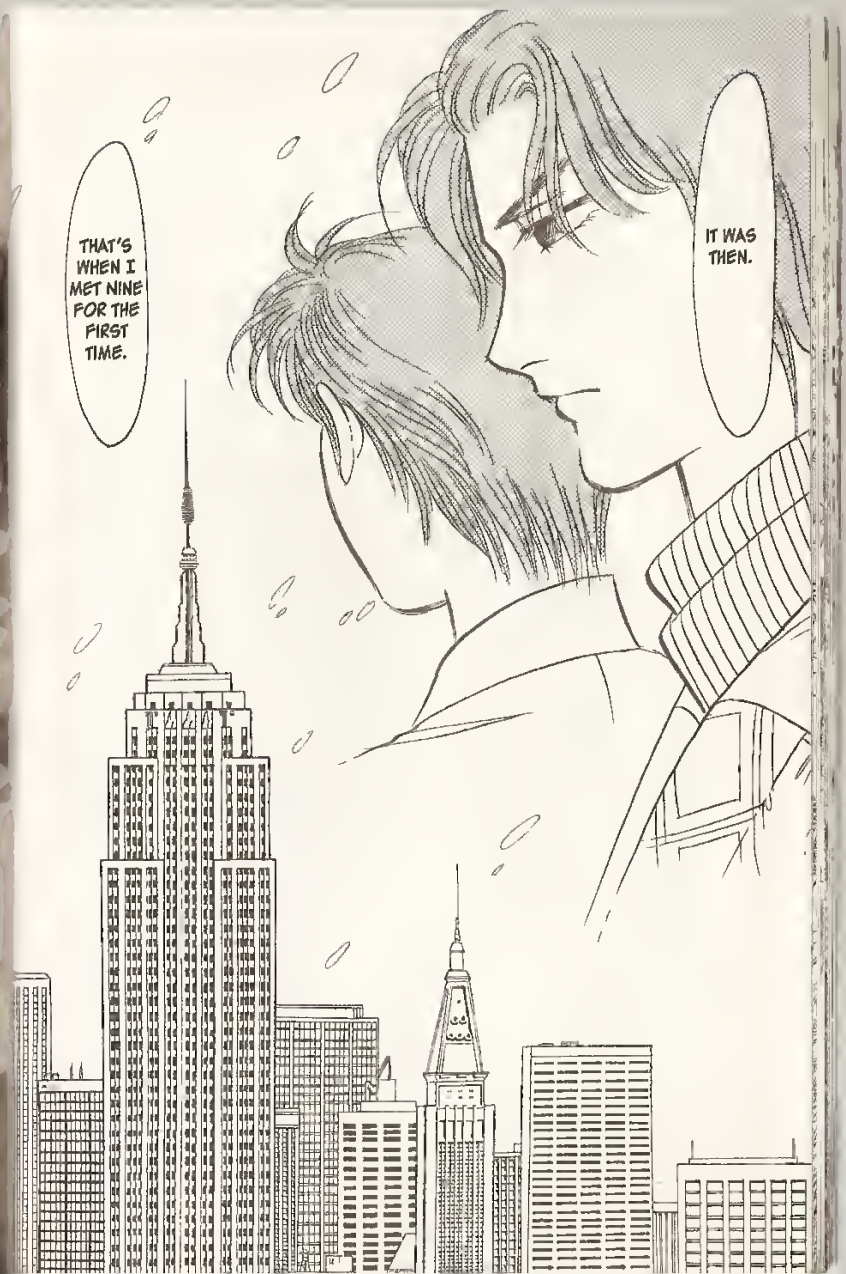

IT SHOULDN'T COME AS ANY SURPRISE SHE HAS SEVERAL DOUBLES TO WHOM SHE RELEGATES COMMAND.
I'M ONE OF THEM.
NINE HAS A LOT TO DO.
YEAH, RIGHT!
JUST WHEN I THOUGHT YOU WERE TOTALLY COOL!
AND THEN SOME. DON'T GET JEALOUS.
WE HAVE TO MAKE SURE SHE'S IN TOP SHAPE TO RUN HER MISSIONS.
THAT MEANS WATCHING OUT FOR HER WELL-BEING.
WE ALSO HAVE TO TAKE CARE OF HER.
WE MOBILIZE TEAMS AND DEAL WITH LOGISTICS ON HER ORDERS.
HOW'D YOU GUYS MEET?
I'VE BEEN MEANING TO ASK YOU THIS.
HEY.

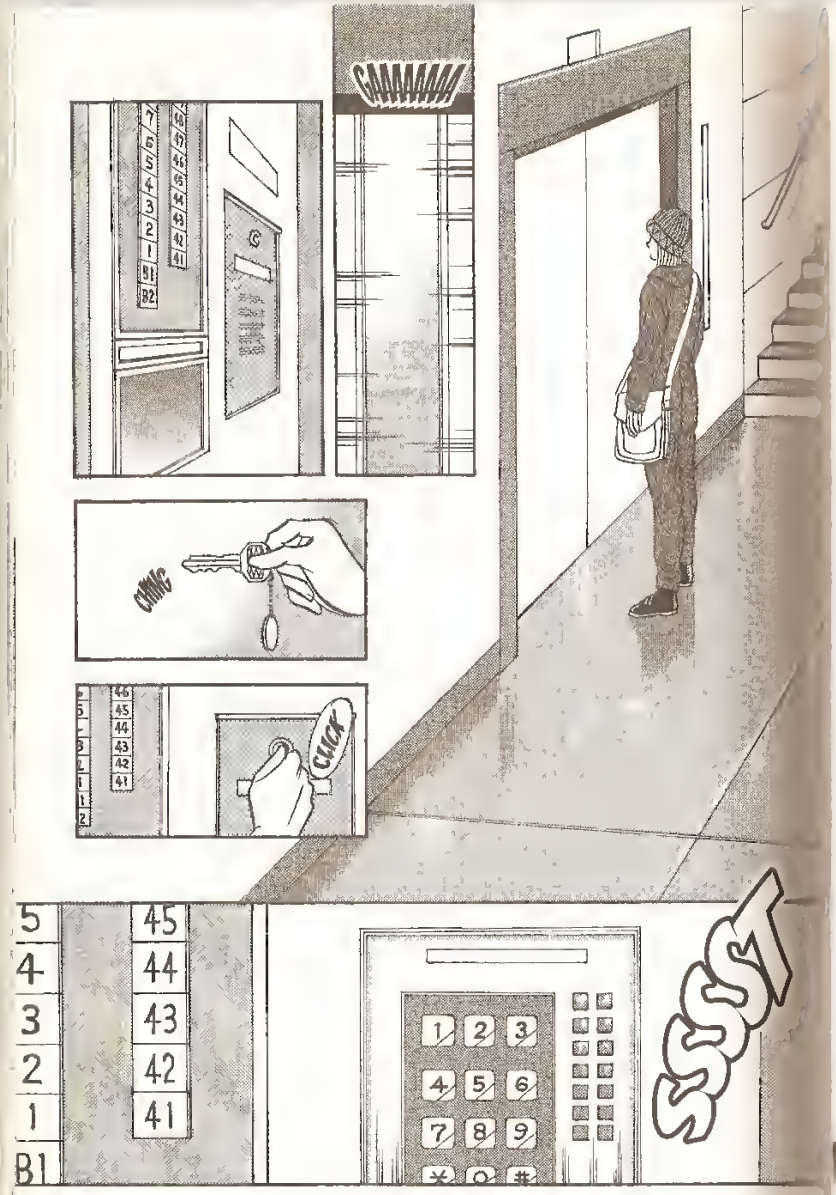

I WAS 15 THEN.
NAH, IT'S OKAY.
OOPS. I GET THE FEELING YOU'RE NOT ALLOWED TO ANSWER THAT.

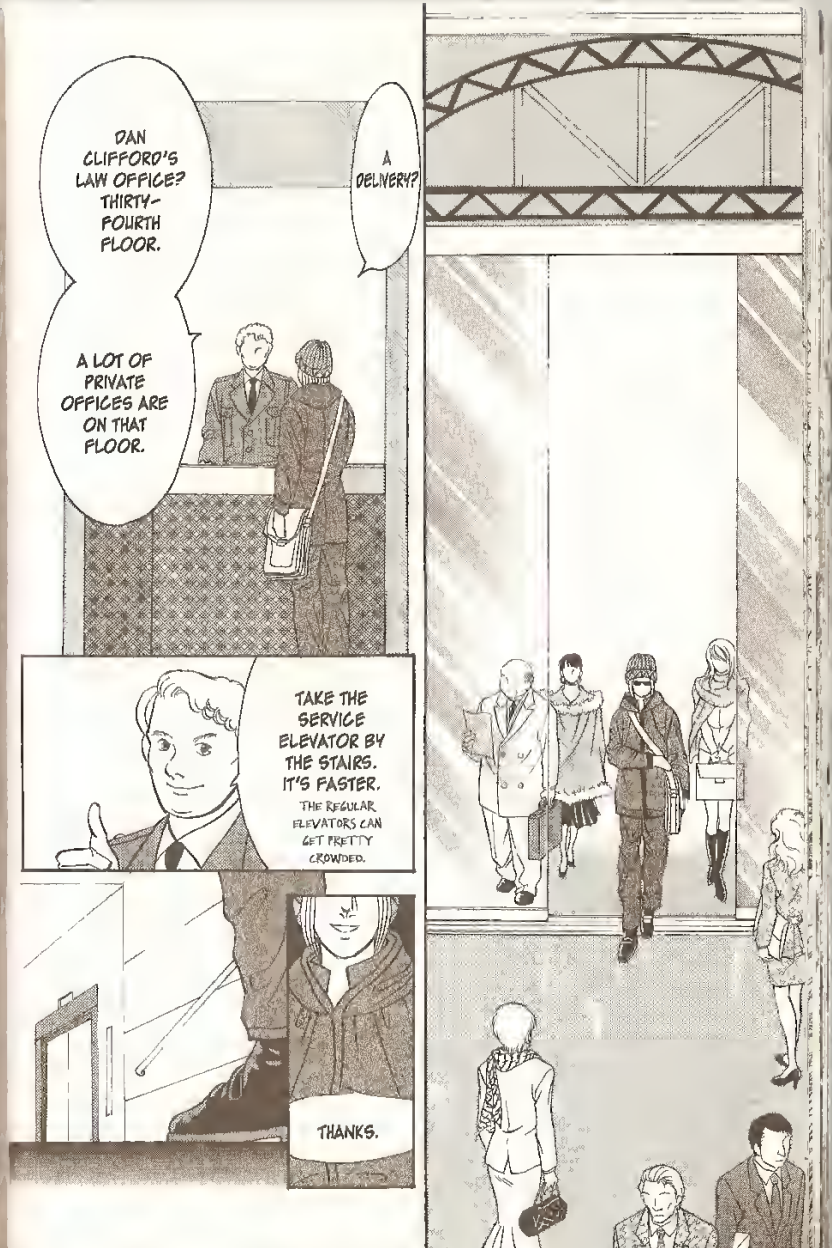


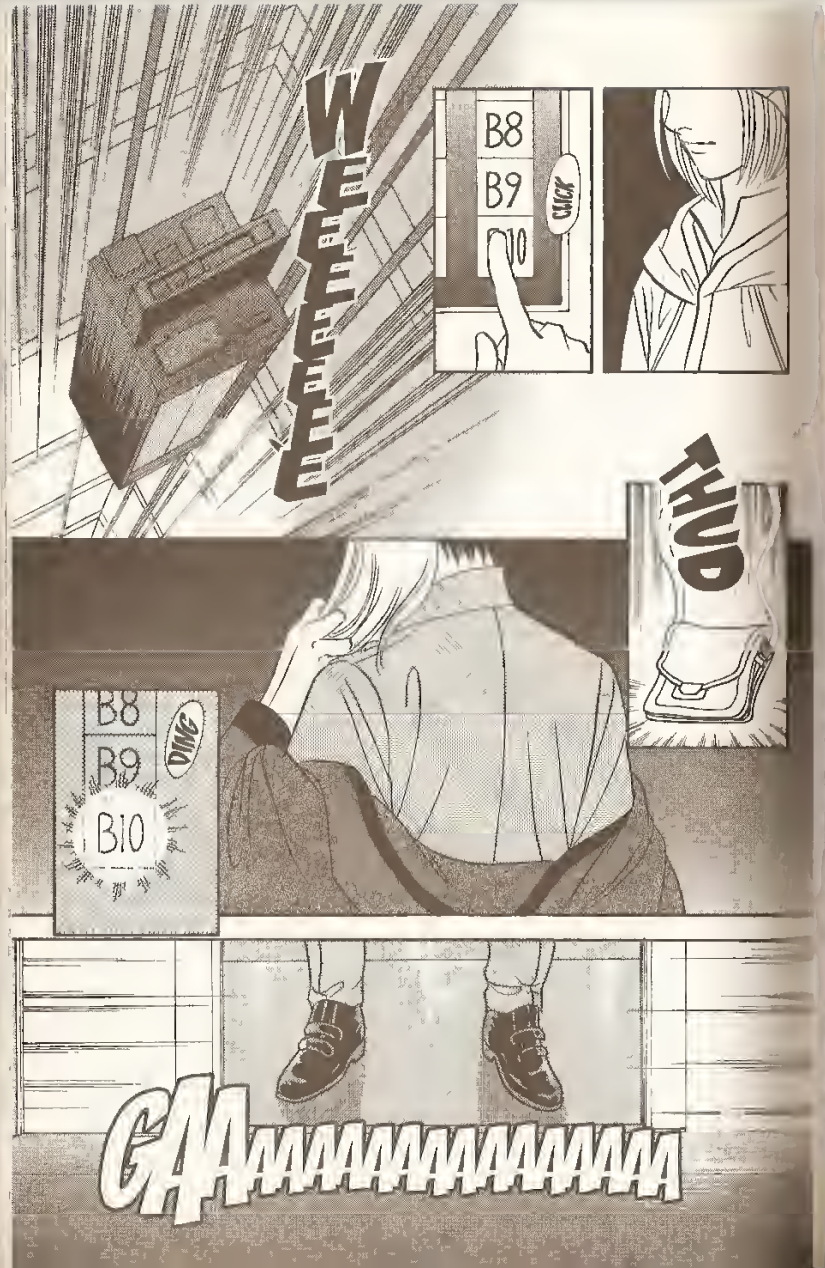

WHZZZZ

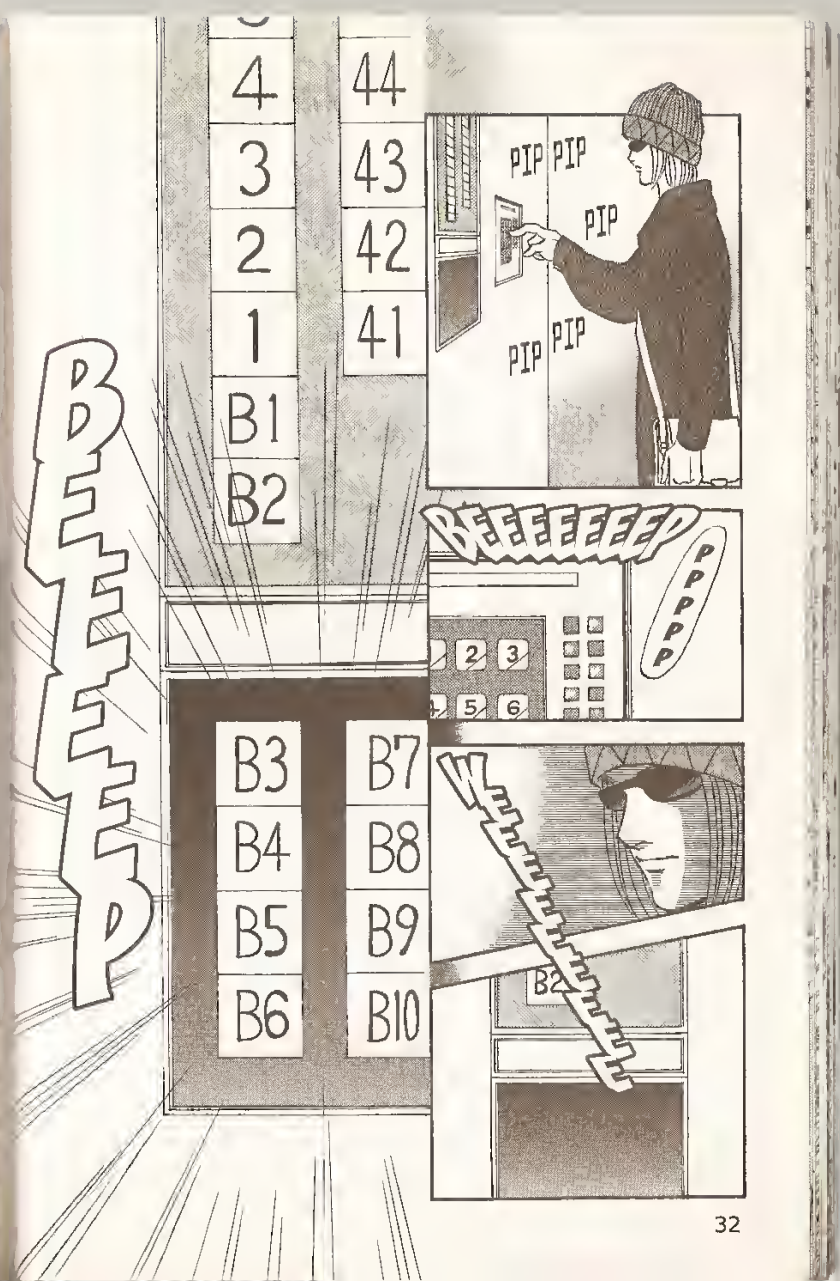

WHZZZZZ
ZZZZ

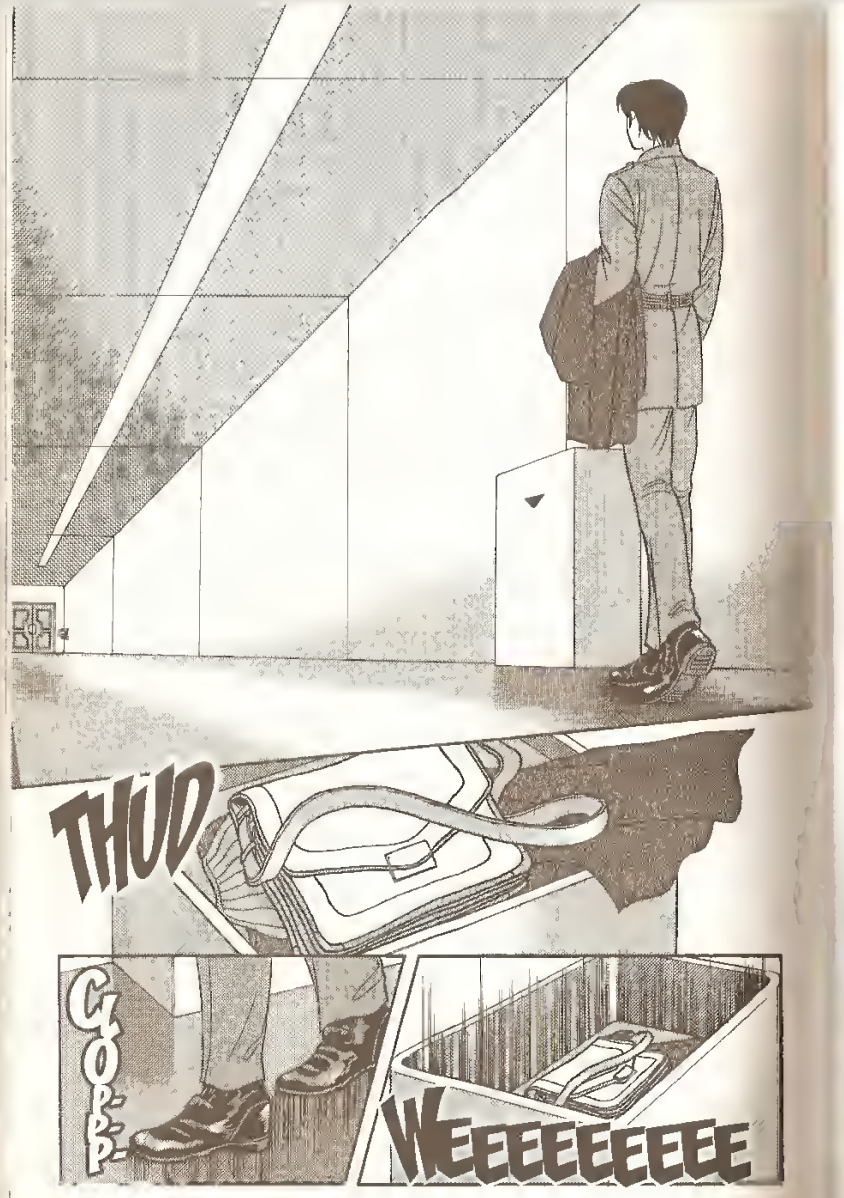

THAT'S WHEN I MET NINE FOR THE FIRST TIME.
IT WAS THEN.

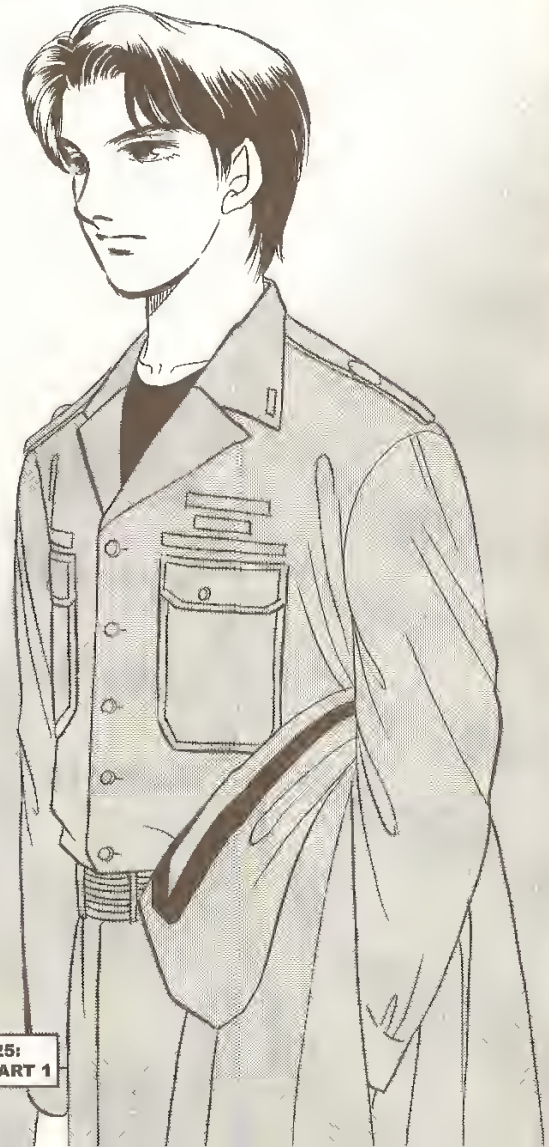

CRAAAAAAAH
CHING
CLICK
5 4 3 2 1 B1
45 44 43 42 41
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9
* 0 #
SSST


DAN CLIFFORD'S LAW OFFICE? THIRTY-FOURTH FLOOR.
A DELIVERY?
A LOT OF PRIVATE OFFICES ARE ON THAT FLOOR.
TAKE THE SERVICE ELEVATOR BY THE STAIRS. IT'S FASTER.
THE REGULAR ELEVATORS CAN GET PRETTY CROWDED.
THANKS.


WEEEEEEEE
B8
B9
B10
CLICK
THUD
B8
B9
B10
DING
GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAA


4
3
2
1
B1
B2
44
43
42
41
BEEEEP
PIP PIP
PIP
PIP PIP
BEEEEEEEP
PPPPP
B3
B4
B5
B6
B7
B8
B9
B10
B2

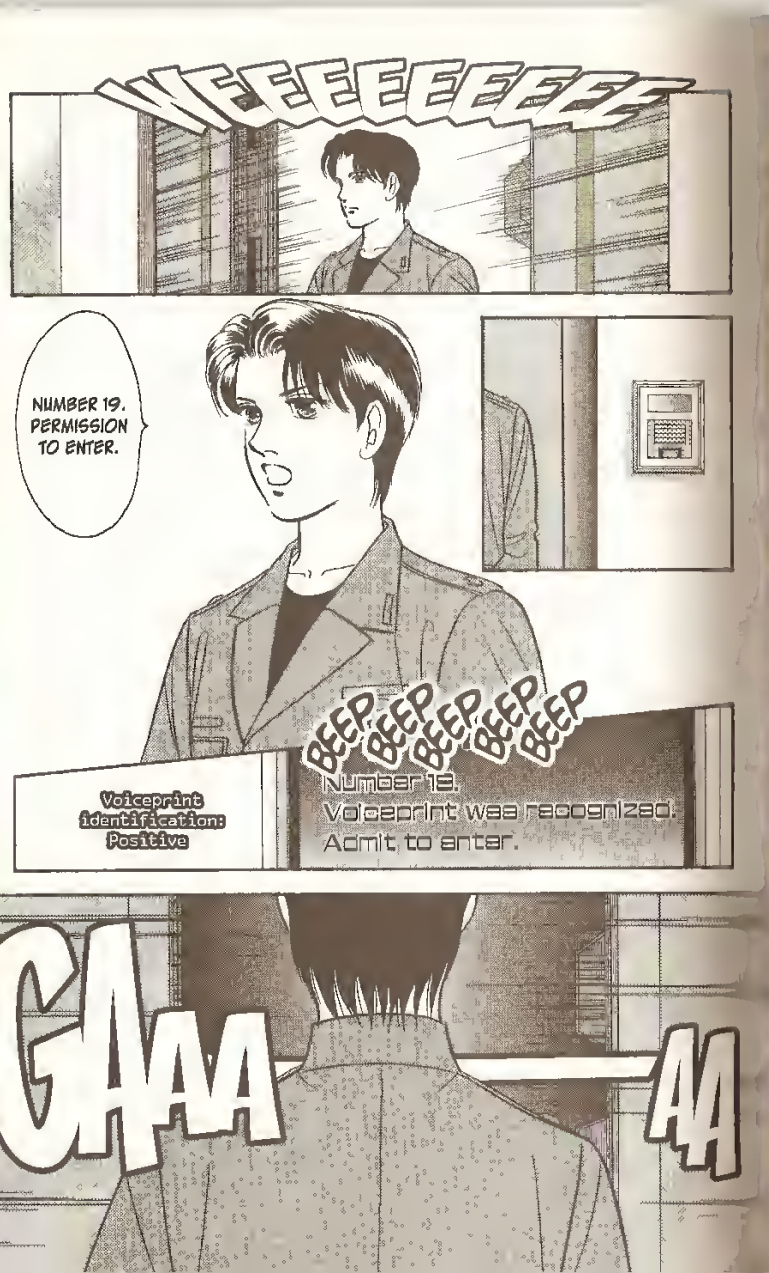


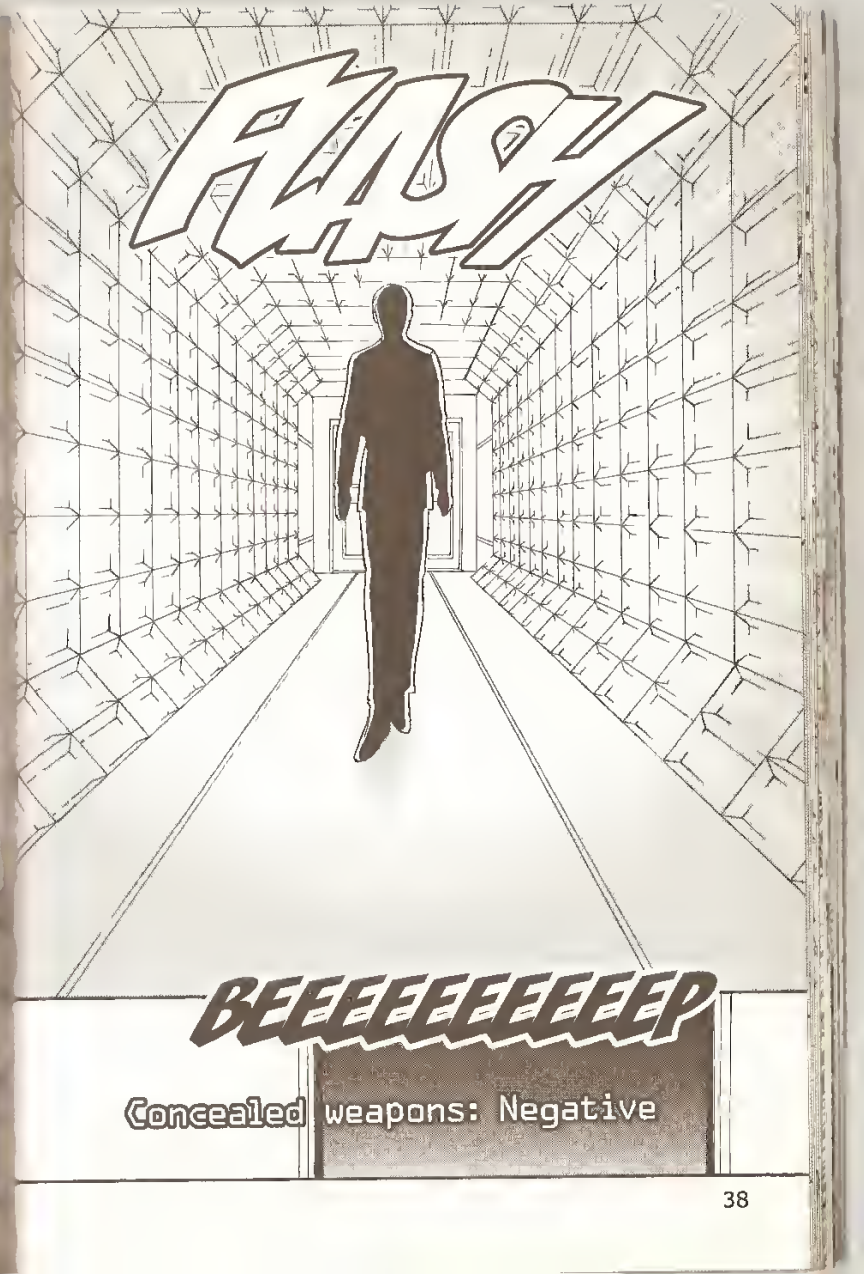


END OF MISSION 25:
BLUE BEGINNINGS, PART 1


CLOP-P-P
CLOP-
P-
CLOP-
P-P
BIP
BEEE
EP
Fingerprint identification: Positive


WEEEE
EEEEEE
SLAM
FLASH
FLASH
FLASH


WEEEEEEEEE
NUMBER 19. PERMISSION TO ENTER.
BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP BEEP
Voiceprint identification: Positive
Number 19. Voiceprint was recognized. Admit to enter.
GAAA
AA


FLASH
BEEEEEEEEEEEP
Concealed weapons: Negative



Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 2



Ultimate Blue (U.B.)

ULTIMATE BLUE



It is the world's largest and most powerful organization, yet very few are even aware of this last line of defense against global destruction.

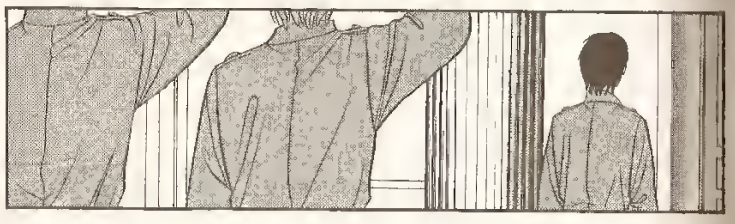
Nothing is known about where it is based or how many agents it has. Stationed throughout the world, its agents are beyond the constraints of nationality, race, age, and gender.

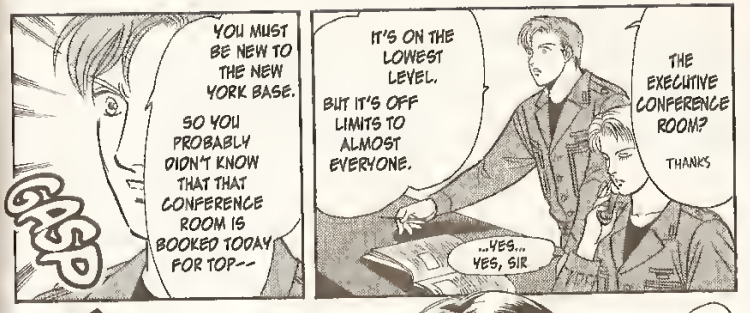
The agents are known only by their codenames and code numbers. Smaller the code number, greater their command.

The nine agents known by just single digits head the entire organization.

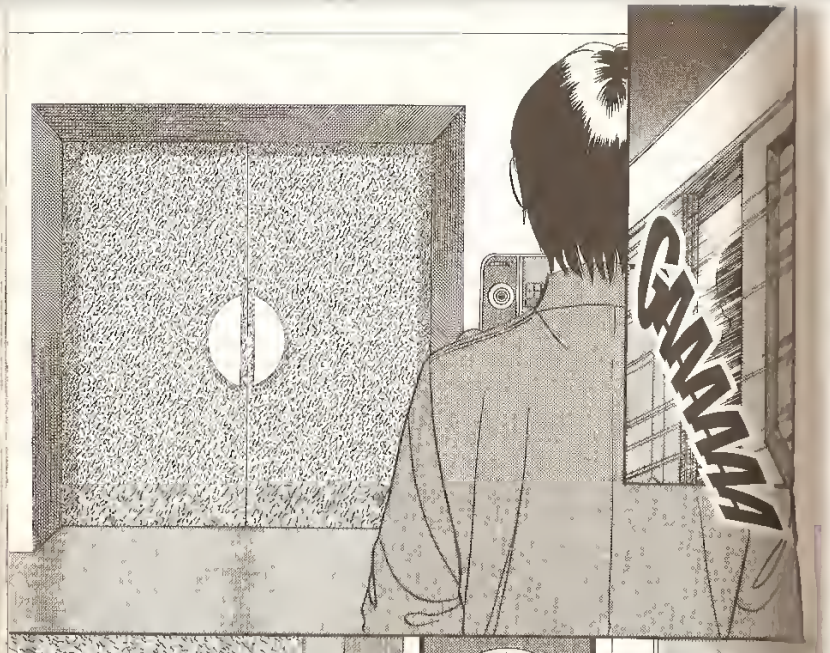
For the "ones" as they are known, it is said that nothing is impossible.

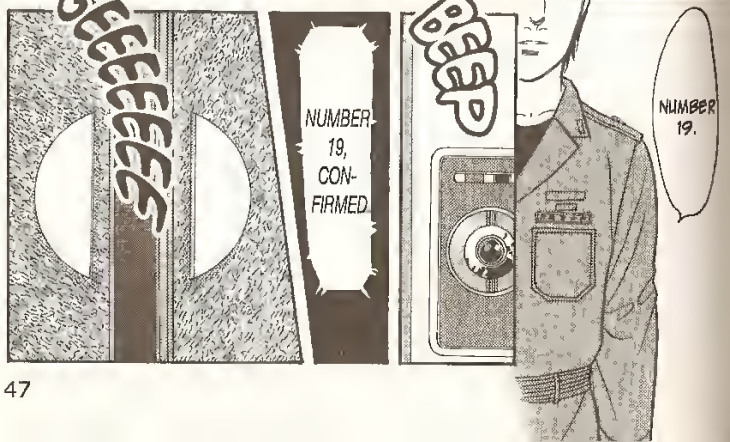

SO WHICH WAY'S THE CONFER-ENCE ROOM?
KA-THUNK
SORRY, SIR!
THE ELEVATOR AT THE END OF THE RIGHT HALL LEADS DIRECTLY TO THE CONFERENCE ROOM. I'LL TAKE YOU THERE MYSELF.
OH!
YOU IDIOT! LOOK AT THE NUMBER OF STARS!
WHAT? WHAT IS IT?
I THINK I CAN FIND MY WAY. THANKS ANYWAY.

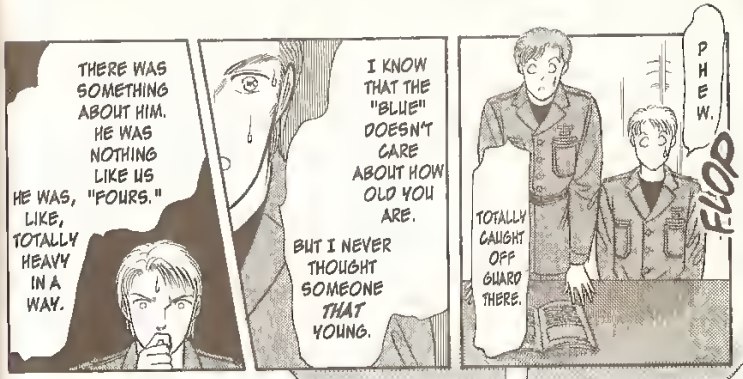


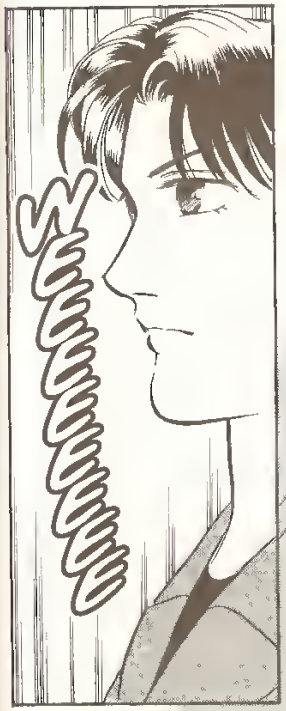

GASP
YOU MUST BE NEW TO THE NEW YORK BASE.
SO YOU PROBABLY DIDN'T KNOW THAT THAT CONFERENCE ROOM IS BOOKED TODAY FOR TOP--
IT'S ON THE LOWEST LEVEL.
BUT IT'S OFF LIMITS TO ALMOST EVERYONE.
...YES... YES, SIR
THE EXECUTIVE CONFERENCE ROOM?
THANKS

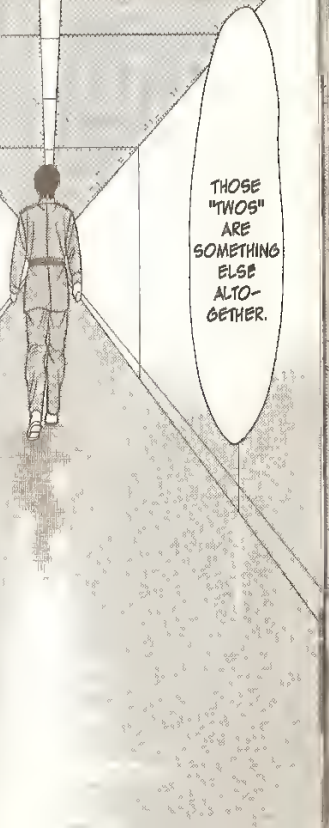

KA-THUNK
SORRY, SIR!
I'VE BEEN ORDERED TO THAT.
Bip


CLUNK
CODE NUMBER, PLEASE.
1 2 3
4 5 6
7 8 9

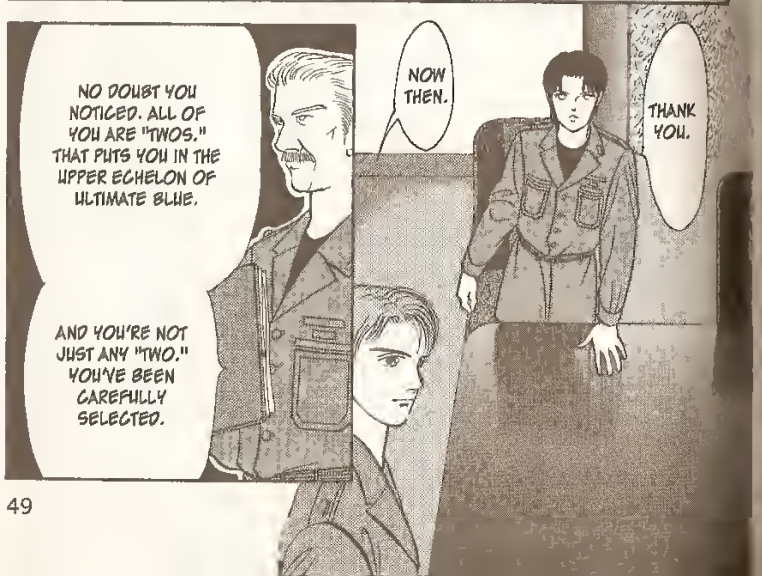

GEEEEESS
NUMBER 19, CONFIRMED.
BEEP
NUMBER 19.

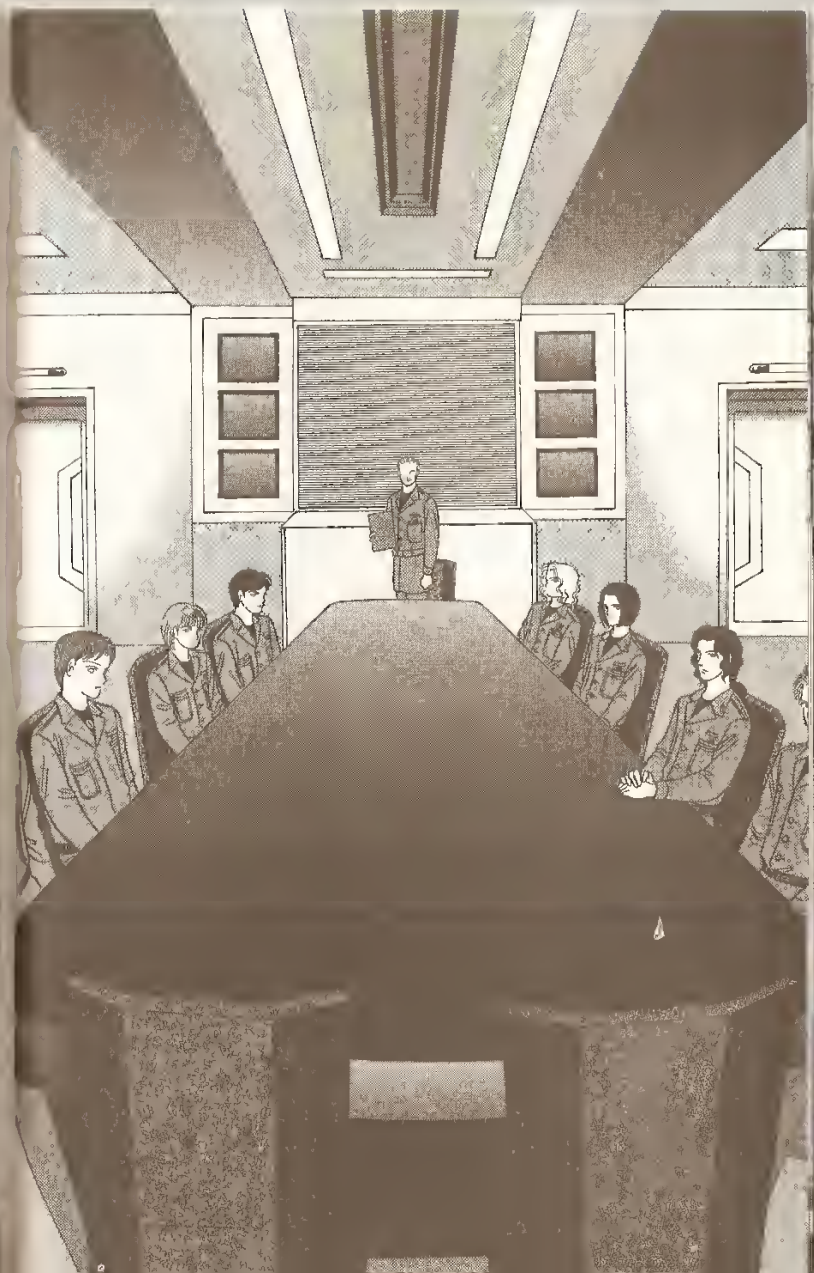

THERE WAS SOMETHING ABOUT HIM. HE WAS NOTHING LIKE US "FOURS."
HE WAS, LIKE, TOTALLY HEAVY IN A WAY.
I KNOW THAT THE "BLUE" DOESN'T CARE ABOUT HOW OLD YOU ARE.
BUT I NEVER THOUGHT SOMEONE THAT YOUNG.
TOTALLY CAUGHT OFF GUARD THERE.
PHEW.
FLOP

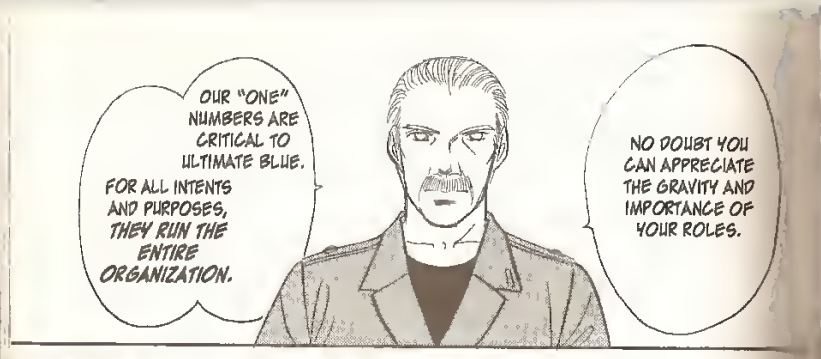

WEEEEEEE

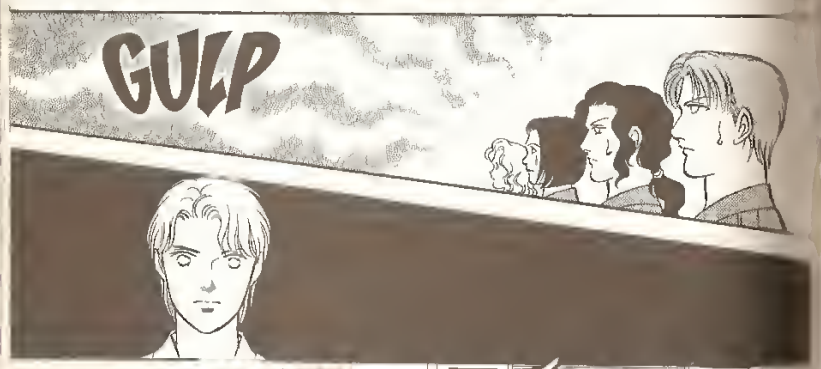

THOSE "TWOS" ARE SOMETHING ELSE ALTOGETHER.

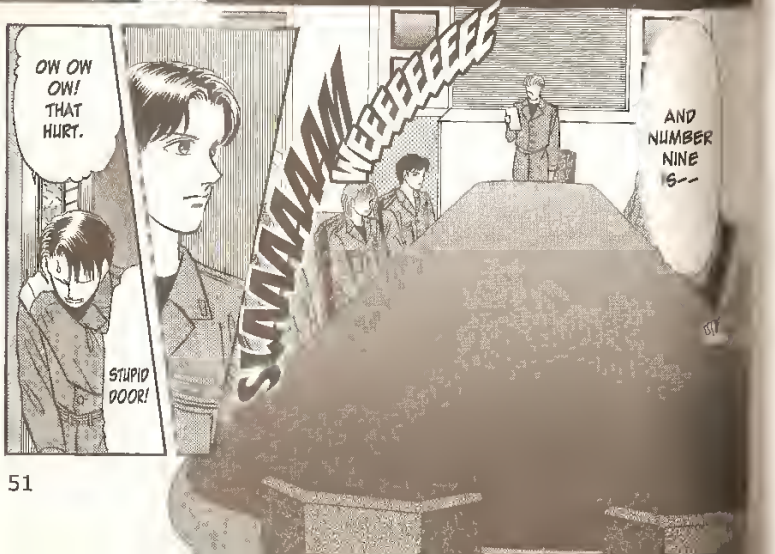

I TAKE IT YOU'RE #19?
WEL-COME.
HAVE A SEAT.
YES, I AM.

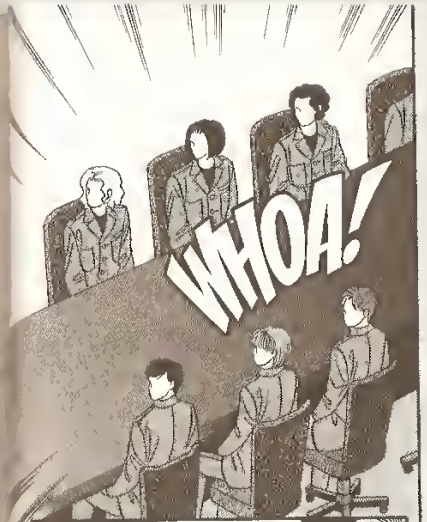

NO DOUBT YOU NOTICED. ALL OF YOU ARE "TWOS." THAT PUTS YOU IN THE UPPER ECHELON OF ULTIMATE BLUE.
AND YOU'RE NOT JUST ANY "TWO." YOU'VE BEEN CAREFULLY SELECTED.
NOW THEN.
THANK YOU.

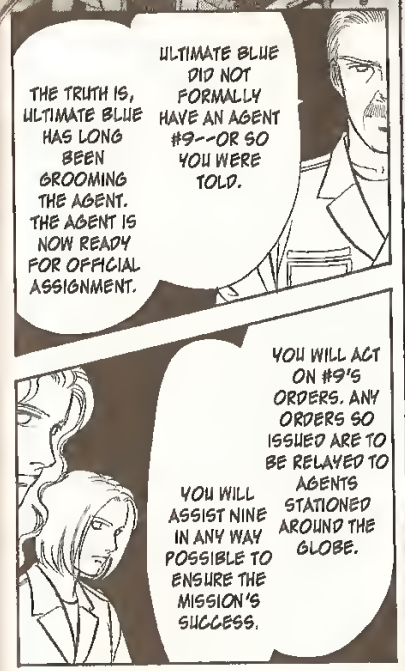


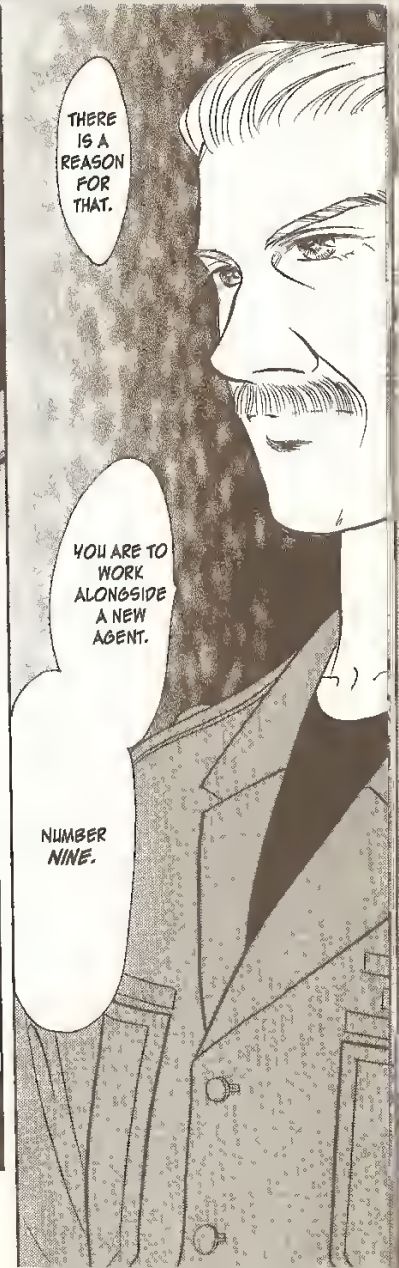

OUR "ONE" NUMBERS ARE CRITICAL TO ULTIMATE BLUE.
FOR ALL INTENTS AND PURPOSES, THEY RUN THE ENTIRE ORGANIZATION.
NO DOUBT YOU CAN APPRECIATE THE GRAVITY AND IMPORTANCE OF YOUR ROLES.

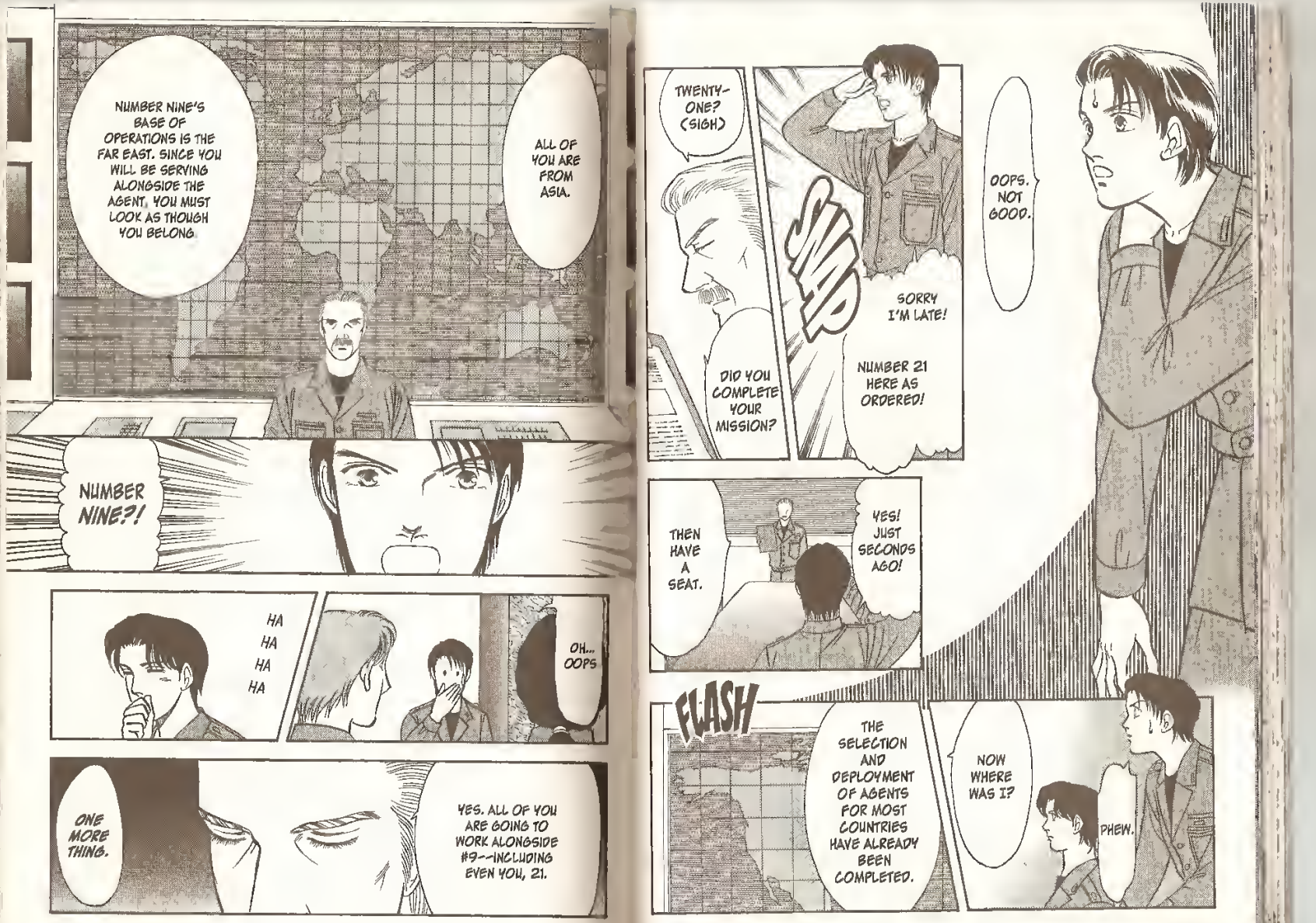

GULP


OW OW OW! THAT HURT.
STUPID DOOR!
WEEEEEEEEE
WWWWWWWS
AND NUMBER NINE IS--


WHOA!

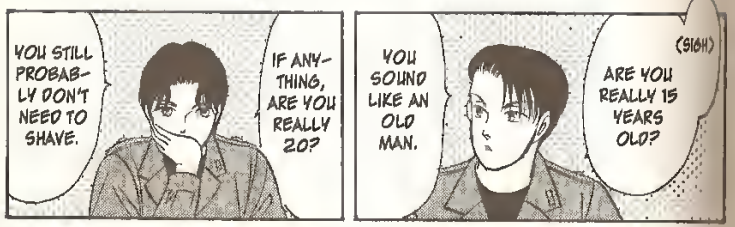

THE TRUTH IS, ULTIMATE BLUE HAS LONG BEEN GROOMING THE AGENT. THE AGENT IS NOW READY FOR OFFICIAL ASSIGNMENT.
ULTIMATE BLUE DID NOT FORMALLY HAVE AN AGENT #9--OR SO YOU WERE TOLD.
YOU WILL ASSIST NINE IN ANY WAY POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THE MISSION'S SUCCESS.
YOU WILL ACT ON #9'S ORDERS. ANY ORDERS SO ISSUED ARE TO BE RELAYED TO AGENTS STATIONED AROUND THE GLOBE.


THERE IS A REASON FOR THAT.
YOU ARE TO WORK ALONGSIDE A NEW AGENT.
NUMBER NINE.


FLASH
THE SELECTION AND DEPLOYMENT OF AGENTS FOR MOST COUNTRIES HAVE ALREADY BEEN COMPLETED.
NOW WHERE WAS I?
PHEW.
OOPS. NOT GOOD.
THEN HAVE A SEAT.
YES! JUST SECONDS AGO!
TWENTY-ONE? (SIGH)
DID YOU COMPLETE YOUR MISSION?
SHIP
SORRY I'M LATE!
NUMBER 21 HERE AS ORDERED!
ALL OF YOU ARE FROM ASIA.
NUMBER NINE'S BASE OF OPERATIONS IS THE FAR EAST. SINCE YOU WILL BE SERVING ALONGSIDE THE AGENT, YOU MUST LOOK AS THOUGH YOU BELONG.
NUMBER NINE?!
HA HA HA HA
OH... OOPS
YES. ALL OF YOU ARE GOING TO WORK ALONGSIDE #9--INCLUDING EVEN YOU, 21.
ONE MORE THING.


WE HAVE ALREADY COMPLETED THE SELECTION PROCESS.
FLIP
FOUR OF YOU ARE TO BE NINE'S DOUBLES.
IN OTHER WORDS, YOU WILL BE THE AGENT'S LIEUTENANTS.
NUMBER 19.
YES.
NUMBER 21.
WHAT?! ME?!
UH... YEAH!
NUMBER 33.
YES.
NUMBER 23.
YES.

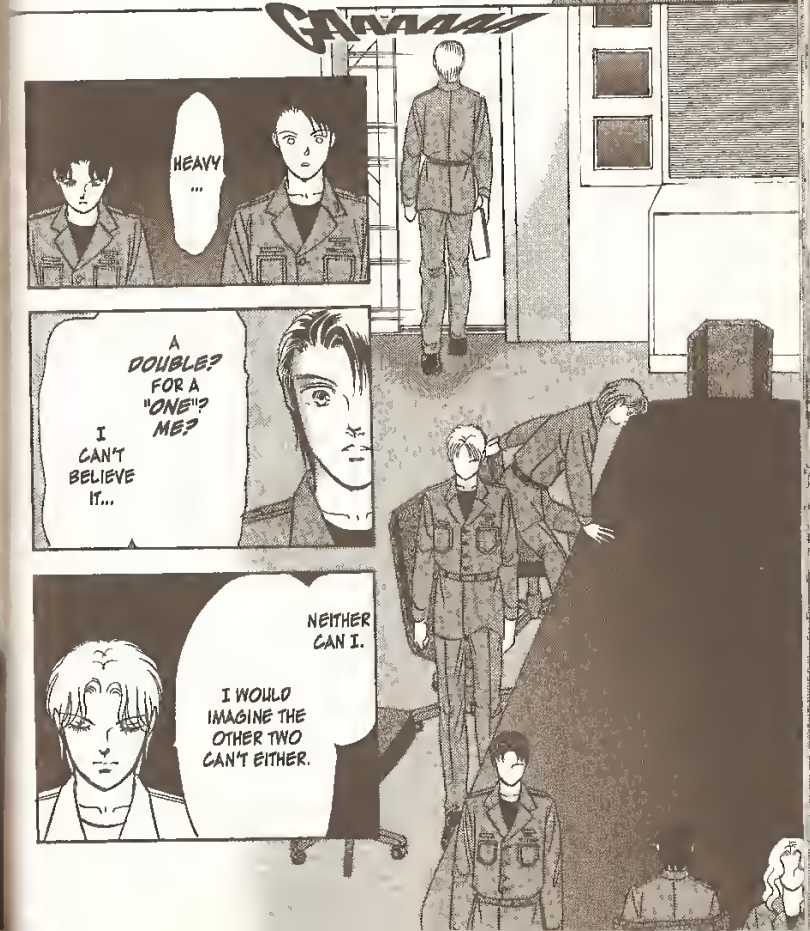

THE FOUR OF YOU ARE THE LEADING CANDIDATES TO BE THE AGENT'S DOUBLES.
ANOTHER HERE WILL BE PROMOTED TO TAKE HIS OR HER PLACE.
NINE HAS THE FINAL SAY.
SUPPOSE YOU ARE DEEMED UNFIT AS A DOUBLE.
YOU WILL BE EVALUATED AFTER WORKING WITH NINE ON THIS NEXT MISSION.
THINK OF THIS NEXT MISSION AS A TEST.


YOU STILL PROBABLY DON'T NEED TO SHAVE.
IF ANYTHING, ARE YOU REALLY 20?
YOU SOUND LIKE AN OLD MAN.
(SIGH) ARE YOU REALLY 15 YEARS OLD?


HUMPH!


I TELL YA, WE'RE IN DEEP AGAIN.
SO HOW HAVE YOU BEEN DOIN', YOU LITTLE RUNT?!
OH, YEAH?! AND YOU'RE STILL THAT MOUTHY LITTLE KID!
IT SEEMS IT.
GREAT! YOU HAVEN'T CHANGED IN THE LEAST!


YOU'LL BE ISSUED YOUR NEW ORDERS IN 10 MINUTES' TIME.
THE FOUR CANDIDATES ARE TO REMAIN.
DISMISSED.

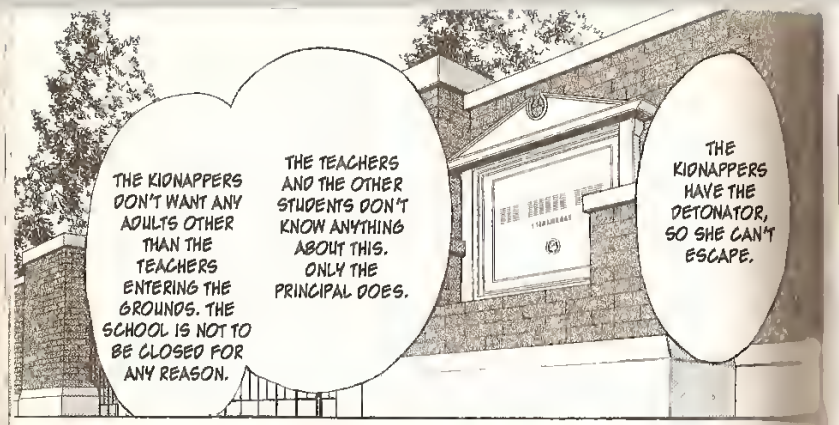

CAAAAAH
HEAVY ...
A DOUBLE? FOR A "ONE"? ME?
I CAN'T BELIEVE IT...
NEITHER CAN I.
I WOULD IMAGINE THE OTHER TWO CAN'T EITHER.

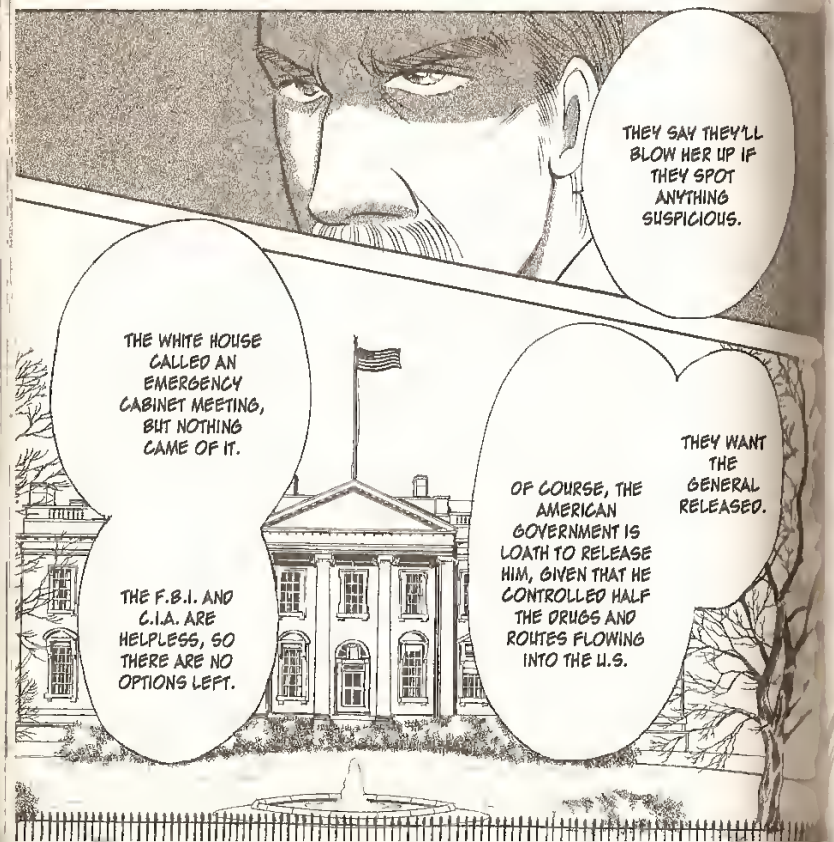

I HEARD THAT NINE IS BRILLIANT AND HAS NERVES OF STEEL.
IT'S A "ONE," SO HE'S PROBABLY UNREAL.
I WONDER WHAT THE AGENT'S LIKE?
EVERYONE IN ULTIMATE BLUE DREAMS OF BEING A DOUBLE FOR A "ONE."
I HOPE I PASS AND BECOME AN OFFICIAL DOUBLE.
LOOKING AT THE CREW HERE, NINE MUST BE YOUNG.
YOUNG, AND A "ONE."
I'M 22.
YOU SAY YOU'RE THE OLDEST, BUT YOU'RE NOT EVEN 25 YET, ARE YOU?
I HEARD THAT "ONES" UNDERGO SPECIAL TRAINING. SO THERE'S NOTHING WRONG WITH A "ONE" BEING YOUNG.
IT'S STILL AN HONOR.

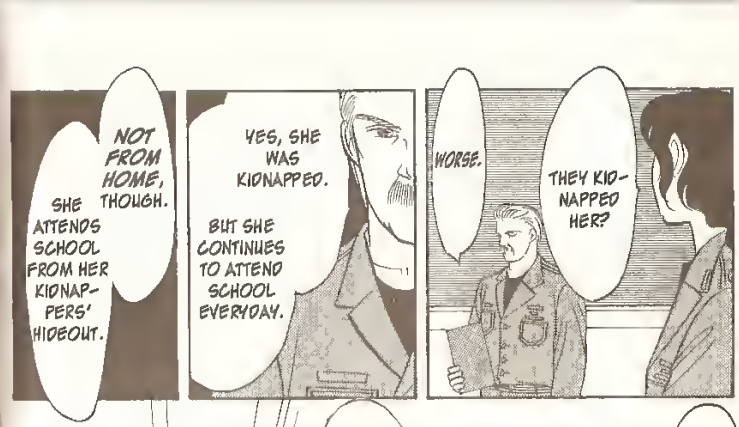

HI, I'M #21.
THIS IS 19. WE TRAINED TOGETHER.
GRINGH
I'M #33 BY THE WAY.
YOU'RE ON VERY GOOD TERMS. DO YOU KNOW EACH OTHER?
IT LOOKS LIKE I'M THE OLDEST HERE.
YO, I'M #23.
I'M PLEASED TO MEET YOU.


NO DOUBT YOU REMEMBER HIM. HE'S GENERAL CANAN--
HE WAS HIS COUNTRY'S DE FACTO LEADER, SO UNSURPRISINGLY HE HAS MANY LOYAL RECRUITS. THEY HAVE TRIED IN VARIOUS WAYS TO SECURE HIS RELEASE, BUT NONE HAVE MET WITH ANY SUCCESS.
HOWEVER, THEIR NEW TACTIC IS DECIDEDLY SINISTER AND VERY AUDACIOUS.
AN AMERICAN SPECIAL FORCES TEAM BROUGHT HIM IN SEVERAL MONTHS AGO.
HE'S SERVING TIME IN A MAXIMUM SECURITY PENITENTIARY IN PENNSYLVANIA.
FLASH
THIS IS SENATOR HOWARD WEEKES.
HE'S BEEN LEADING THE WAR ON DRUGS AND WAS INSTRUMENTAL IN THE GENERAL'S ARREST.
FLASH
THIS IS HIS ONLY DAUGHTER, KATHY.


GAAAAAAA
TAKE YOUR SEATS.
I'M GOING TO OUTLINE YOUR MISSION.
SHUT
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
FLASH
CLICK

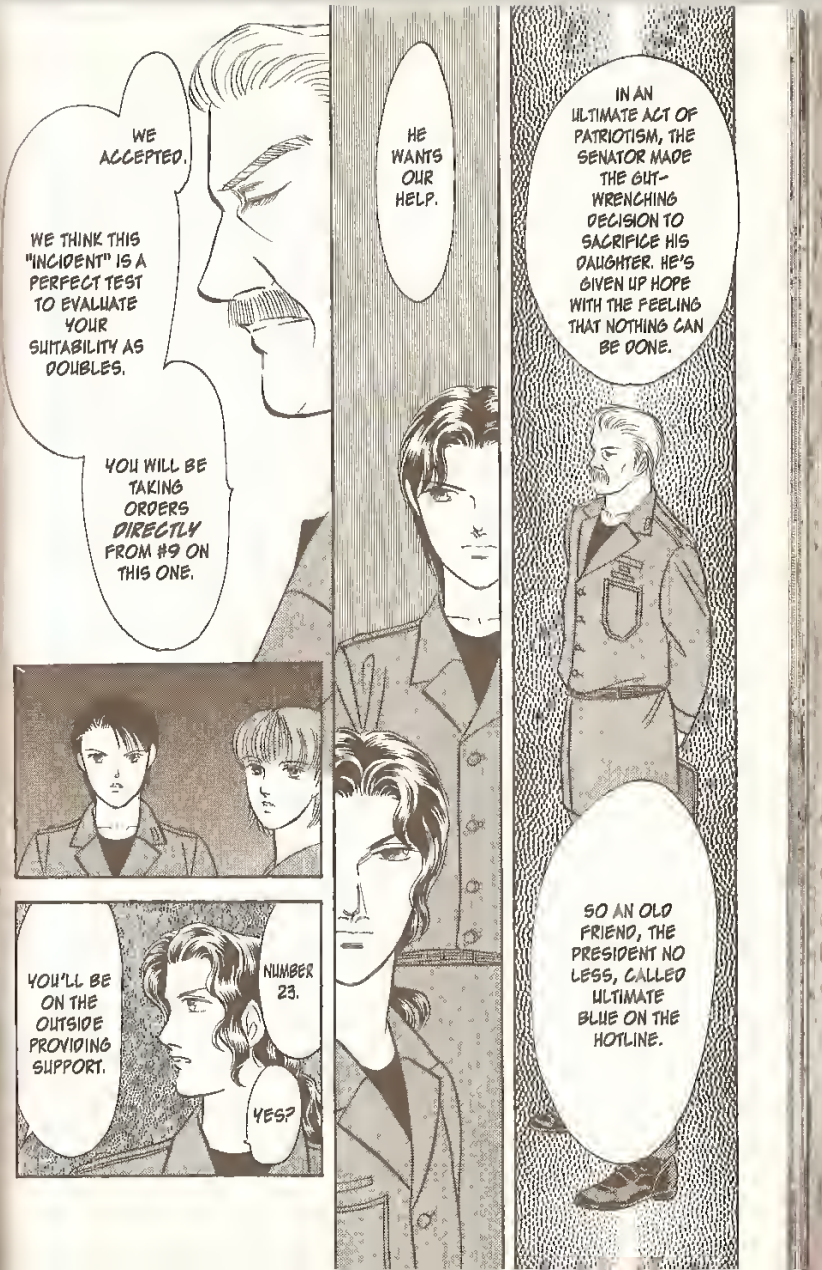

THE KIDNAPPERS HAVE THE DETONATOR, SO SHE CAN'T ESCAPE.
THE TEACHERS AND THE OTHER STUDENTS DON'T KNOW ANYTHING ABOUT THIS. ONLY THE PRINCIPAL DOES.
THE KIDNAPPERS DON'T WANT ANY ADULTS OTHER THAN THE TEACHERS ENTERING THE GROUNDS. THE SCHOOL IS NOT TO BE CLOSED FOR ANY REASON.


THEY SAY THEY'LL BLOW HER UP IF THEY SPOT ANYTHING SUSPICIOUS.
THEY WANT THE GENERAL RELEASED.
OF COURSE, THE AMERICAN GOVERNMENT IS LOATH TO RELEASE HIM, GIVEN THAT HE CONTROLLED HALF THE DRUGS AND ROUTES FLOWING INTO THE U.S.
THE WHITE HOUSE CALLED AN EMERGENCY CABINET MEETING, BUT NOTHING CAME OF IT.
THE F.B.I. AND C.I.A. ARE HELPLESS, SO THERE ARE NO OPTIONS LEFT.


THEY KIDNAPPED HER?
WORSE.
YES, SHE WAS KIDNAPPED.
BUT SHE CONTINUES TO ATTEND SCHOOL EVERYDAY.
SHE ATTENDS SCHOOL FROM HER KIDNAPPERS' HIDEOUT.
NOT FROM HOME, THOUGH.


IT GETS WORSE.
A BOMB THAT CAN BLOW UP AN ENTIRE BUILDING IS STRAPPED TO HER WAIST.


KATHY'S 14.
NOT QUITE.
IT'S A JUNIOR HIGH.
DON'T WORRY. YOU DON'T LOOK IT.
I'M 20!
I'M GOING UNDER-COVER AT A SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL?
HUH? ME?
19, 21, AND 33, YOU'LL POSE AS STUDENTS AND GO INSIDE WITH 9.
WHAT?!
IT'S ALL YOURS, NINE.
I BRIEFED THEM.
NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT THERE. NINE'S YOUNGER THAN KATHY IS.
ER... UM... UM...
WHAT AM I?
GAAAAAA
THEN ISN'T NINE GOING TO BE--?

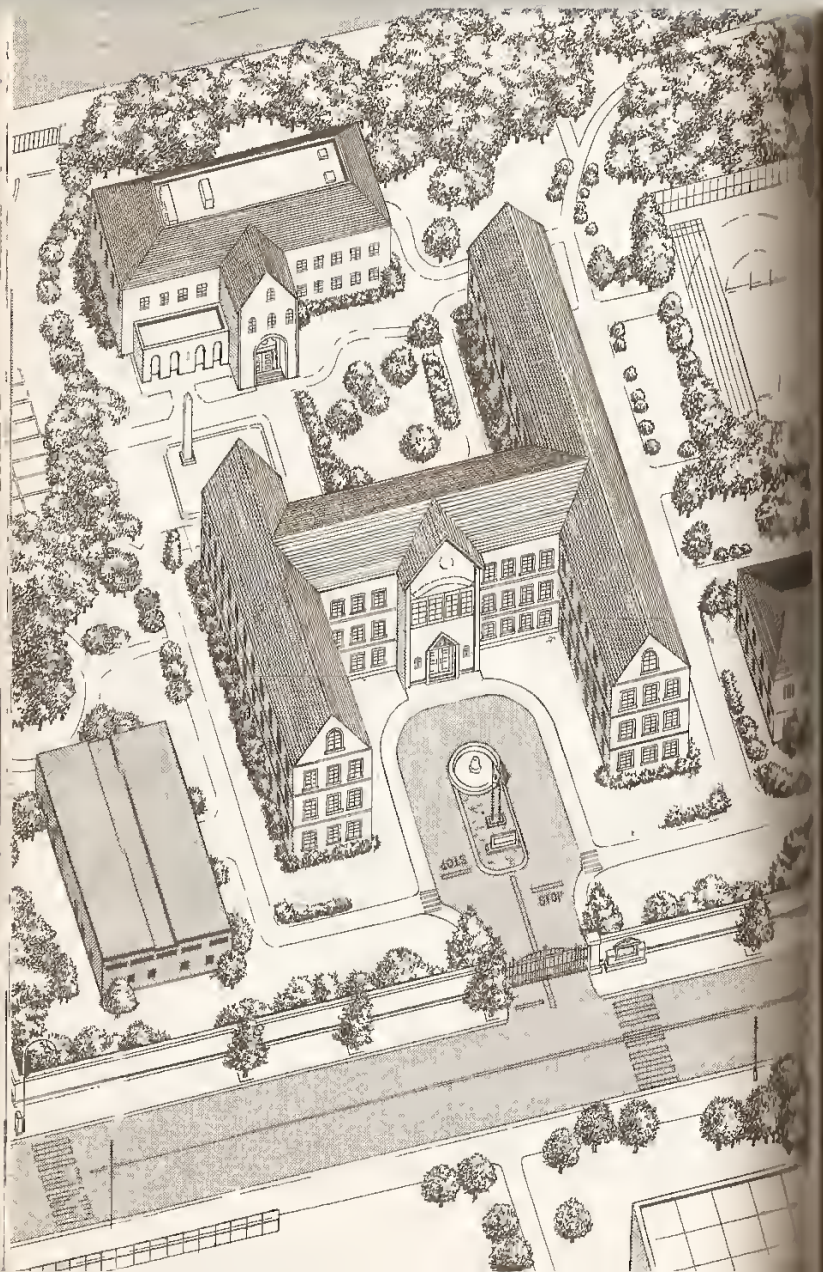

WE ACCEPTED.
WE THINK THIS "INCIDENT" IS A PERFECT TEST TO EVALUATE YOUR SUITABILITY AS DOUBLES.
YOU WILL BE TAKING ORDERS DIRECTLY FROM #9 ON THIS ONE.
HE WANTS OUR HELP.
IN AN ULTIMATE ACT OF PATRIOTISM, THE SENATOR MADE THE GUT-WRENCHING DECISION TO SACRIFICE HIS DAUGHTER. HE'S GIVEN UP HOPE WITH THE FEELING THAT NOTHING CAN BE DONE.
YOU'LL BE ON THE OUTSIDE PROVIDING SUPPORT.
NUMBER 23.
YES?
SO AN OLD FRIEND, THE PRESIDENT NO LESS, CALLED ULTIMATE BLUE ON THE HOTLINE.



Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 3



End of Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 2

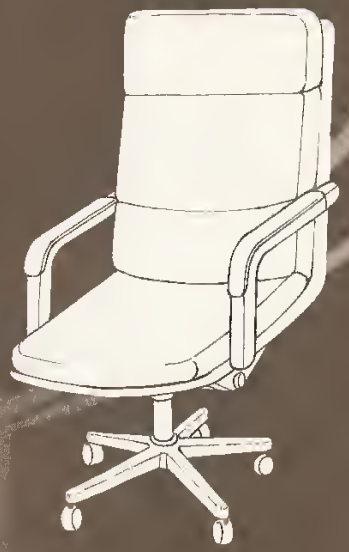


Legendary in reputation, Ultimate Blue is a massive organization with untold legions of operatives. Each agent hes their own code number.

The agents known only by a single number--#1 through #9--run the entire orgenization. It is said they even have the power to change the course of world history.

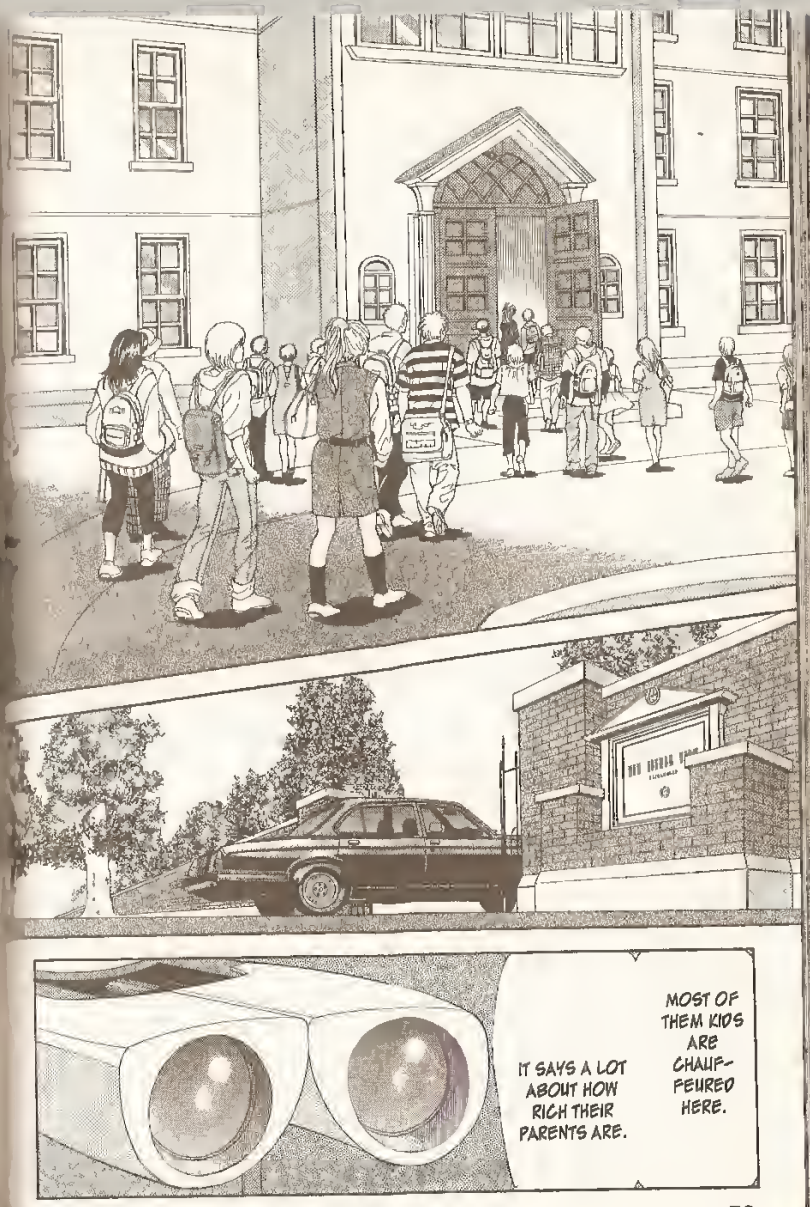
Mystery shrouds how and where the "ones" are recruited.





A seat for a "one" lay unclaimed for a long while--until it was taken up by #9

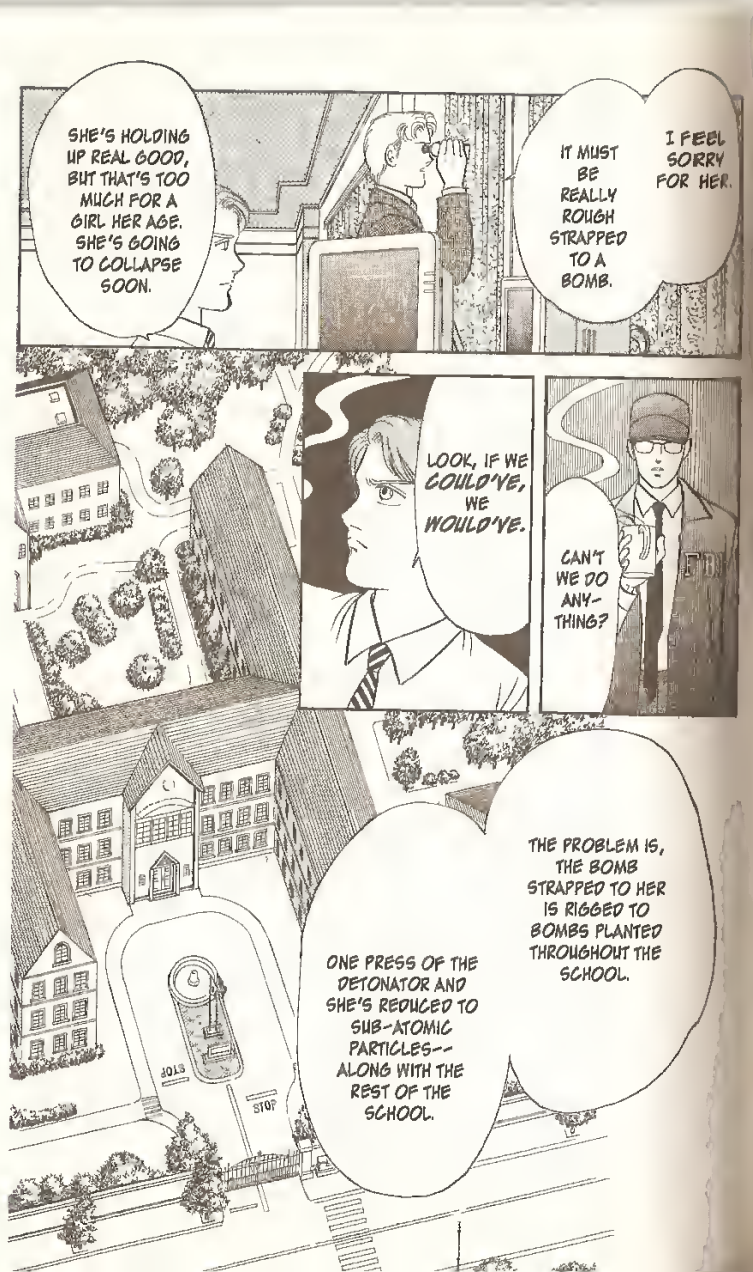
Nine was 13 years old at the time.

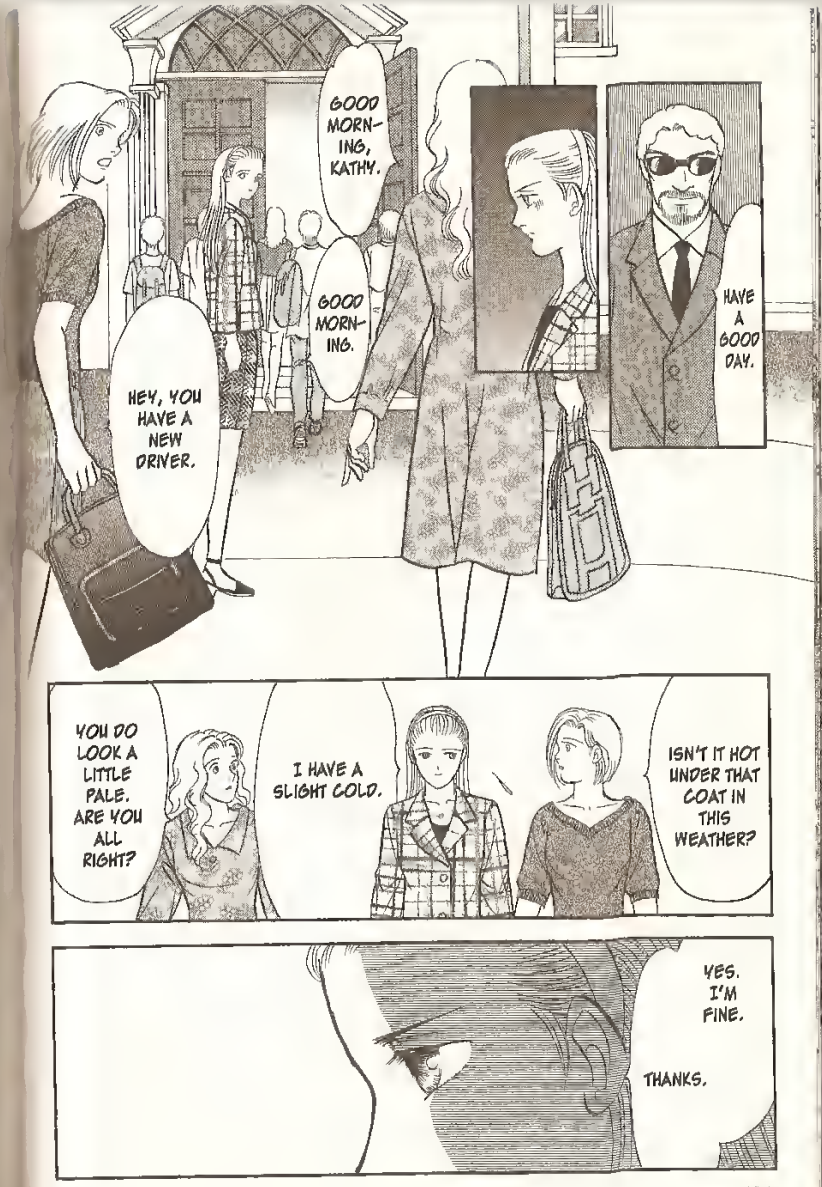

IT SAYS A LOT ABOUT HOW RICH THEIR PARENTS ARE.
MOST OF THEM KIDS ARE CHAUF-FEURED HERE.

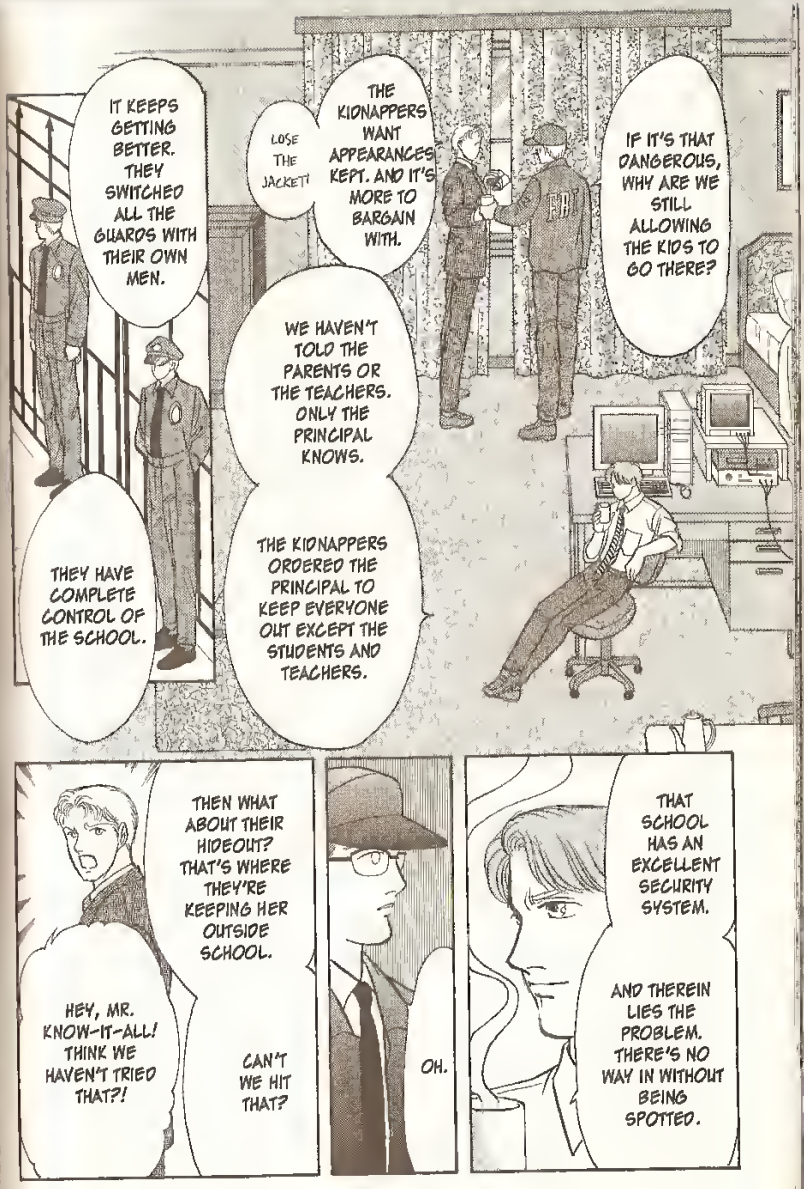

HA!
THEY MUST BE KILLING THEMSELVES LAUGHING, KNOWING WE CAN'T DO SQUAT!
LIKE, THEY DON'T ALREADY KNOW WE'RE HERE?!
HEY, CURT! CAN YOU MAKE IT ANY MORE OBVIOUS?! THE KIDNAPPERS MIGHT SEE YOU!
OH YEAH? I THINK I'M LESS OBVIOUS THAN THAT ROOKIE THERE.
THAT DOESN'T MEAN YOU SHOULD BE SO OBVIOUS ABOUT IT.
HUH?
HEY, YOU!
WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU'RE DOING?!
FBI
FBI


CLICK


HEY, MIKE! SHE'S HERE! GET A CLOSE UP ON THE MONITOR!
IT'S THE KIDNAPPERS' BLACK JAG!
GET RID OF THAT JACKET, YOU IDIOT!
THIS IS SUPPOSED TO BE A STAKEOUT, AND YOU'RE WALKING AROUND WITH A GIANT SIGN SAYING "THE F.B.I. IS HERE"!
MAKING BREAK-FAST?
CLAT CLAT CLAT
THUNK
FLASH


SHE'S HOLDING UP REAL GOOD, BUT THAT'S TOO MUCH FOR A GIRL HER AGE. SHE'S GOING TO COLLAPSE SOON.
IT MUST BE REALLY ROUGH STRAPPED TO A BOMB.
I FEEL SORRY FOR HER.
LOOK, IF WE COULD'VE, WE WOULD'VE.
CAN'T WE DO ANY-THING?
THE PROBLEM IS, THE BOMB STRAPPED TO HER IS RIGGED TO BOMBS PLANTED THROUGHOUT THE SCHOOL.
ONE PRESS OF THE DETONATOR AND SHE'S REDUCED TO SUB-ATOMIC PARTICLES-- ALONG WITH THE REST OF THE SCHOOL.
STOP

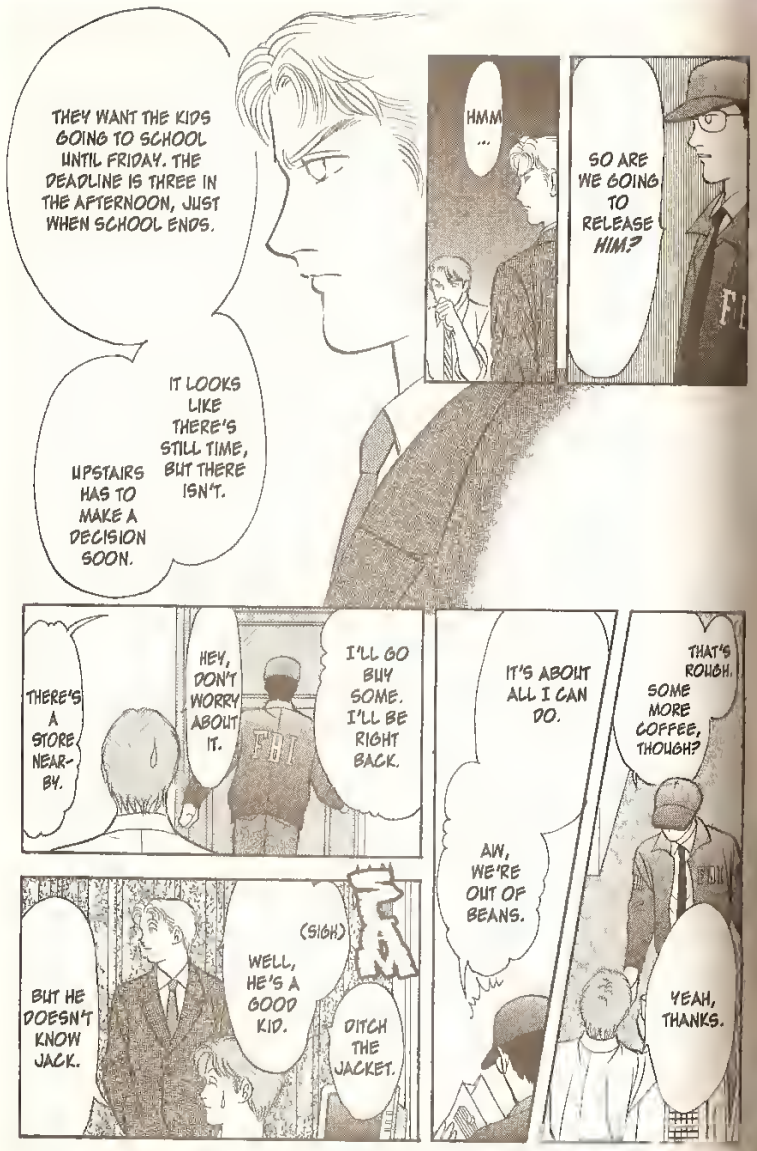

GOOD MORN-ING, KATHY.
GOOD MORN-ING.
HEY, YOU HAVE A NEW DRIVER.
HAVE A GOOD DAY.
YOU DO LOOK A LITTLE PALE. ARE YOU ALL RIGHT?
I HAVE A SLIGHT COLD.
ISN'T IT HOT UNDER THAT COAT IN THIS WEATHER?
YES. I'M FINE.
THANKS.

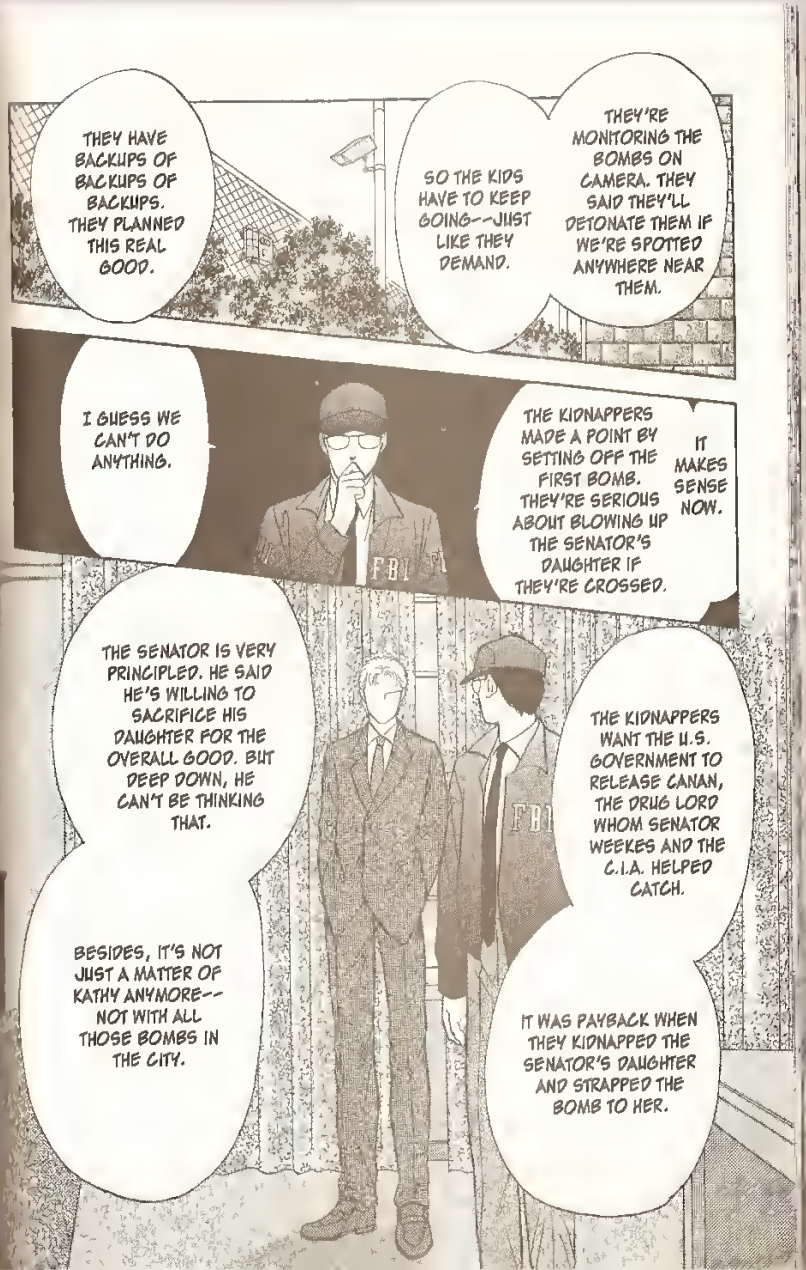

IF IT'S THAT DANGEROUS, WHY ARE WE STILL ALLOWING THE KIDS TO GO THERE?
THE KIDNAPPERS WANT APPEARANCES KEPT. AND IT'S MORE TO BARGAIN WITH.
LOSE THE JACKET!
IT KEEPS GETTING BETTER. THEY SWITCHED ALL THE GUARDS WITH THEIR OWN MEN.
WE HAVEN'T TOLD THE PARENTS OR THE TEACHERS. ONLY THE PRINCIPAL KNOWS.
THEY HAVE COMPLETE CONTROL OF THE SCHOOL.
THE KIDNAPPERS ORDERED THE PRINCIPAL TO KEEP EVERYONE OUT EXCEPT THE STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.
THAT SCHOOL HAS AN EXCELLENT SECURITY SYSTEM.
AND THEREIN LIES THE PROBLEM. THERE'S NO WAY IN WITHOUT BEING SPOTTED.
OH.
THEN WHAT ABOUT THEIR HIDEOUT? THAT'S WHERE THEY'RE KEEPING HER OUTSIDE SCHOOL.
CAN'T WE HIT THAT?
HEY, MR. KNOW-IT-ALL! THINK WE HAVEN'T TRIED THAT?!


SO WHAT HAPPENED EXACTLY?
FBI
SOME OF OUR GUYS TRIED TO TRAIL THEM!
I KNOW WE'RE UNDERMANNED HERE, BUT WHAT ARE THEY THINKING UPSTAIRS? THEY SENT US A COMPLETE ROOKIE IN THIS SITUATION!
AND YOU! READ THE REPORTS!
I WAS SUDDENLY ASSIGNED HERE.
YOU REALLY DON'T KNOW JACK.
THEN ALL HECK BROKE LOOSE!
RICK, HERE. THE BLACK JAG'S TURNING RIGHT AT THE MALL.
WHAT?
THEY'RE ON TO YOU! YOU'RE IN DANGER!
GET OUT OF THERE, RICK!

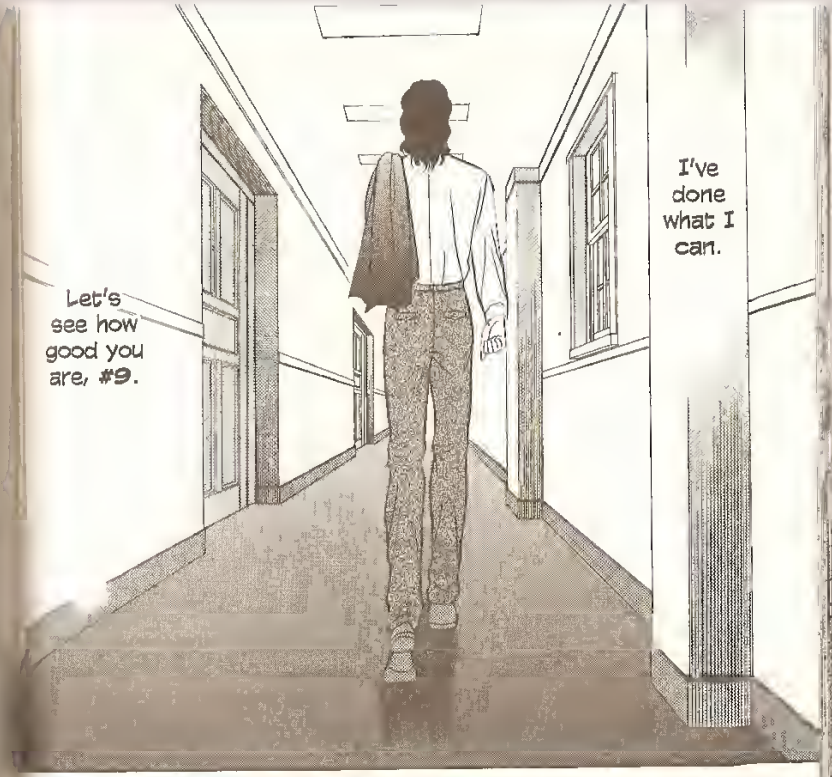

SMASH
WOOOO WOOOO WOOOO
THE KIDNAPPERS TOLD US THEY HAVE BOMBS LIKE THAT THROUGHOUT THE CITY.
BUT OUR GUYS WERE CRITICALLY INJURED.
LUCKILY, THE SHOPPING MALL WASN'T OPEN YET, SO ONLY A FEW PASSERS-BY WERE INJURED--AND NOT SERIOUSLY AT THAT.

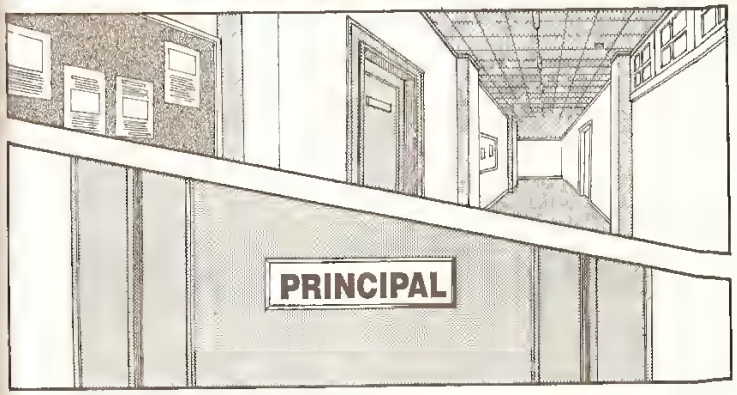

KABOOM

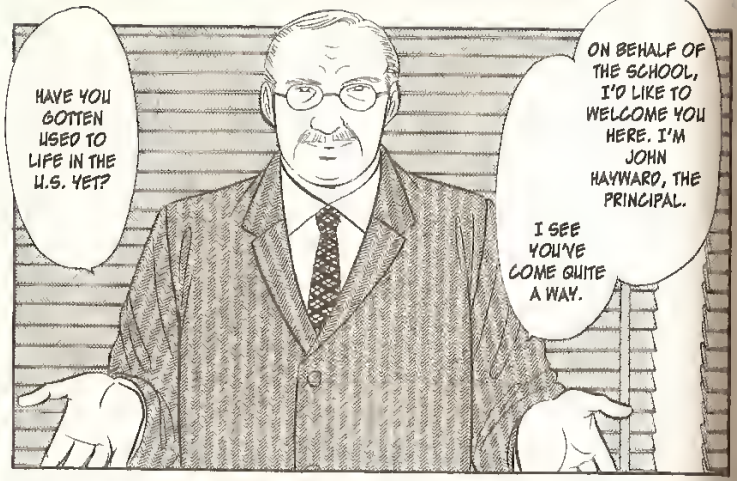

THEY WANT THE KIDS GOING TO SCHOOL UNTIL FRIDAY. THE DEADLINE IS THREE IN THE AFTERNOON, JUST WHEN SCHOOL ENDS.
IT LOOKS LIKE THERE'S STILL TIME, BUT THERE ISN'T.
UPSTAIRS HAS TO MAKE A DECISION SOON.
HMM ...
SO ARE WE GOING TO RELEASE HIM?
THERE'S A STORE NEAR-BY.
HEY, DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
I'LL GO BUY SOME. I'LL BE RIGHT BACK.
BUT HE DOESN'T KNOW JACK.
WELL, HE'S A GOOD KID.
(SIGH)
DITCH THE JACKET.
IT'S ABOUT ALL I CAN DO.
AW, WE'RE OUT OF BEANS.
THAT'S ROUGH. SOME MORE COFFEE, THOUGH?
YEAH, THANKS.

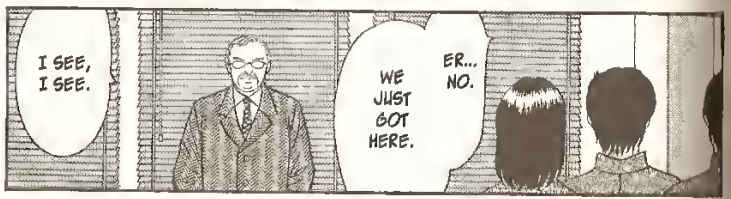

THEY HAVE BACKUPS OF BACKUPS OF BACKUPS. THEY PLANNED THIS REAL GOOD.
SO THE KIDS HAVE TO KEEP GOING--JUST LIKE THEY DEMAND.
THEY'RE MONITORING THE BOMBS ON CAMERA. THEY SAID THEY'LL DETONATE THEM IF WE'RE SPOTTED ANYWHERE NEAR THEM.
I GUESS WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING.
THE KIDNAPPERS MADE A POINT BY SETTING OFF THE FIRST BOMB. THEY'RE SERIOUS ABOUT BLOWING UP THE SENATOR'S DAUGHTER IF THEY'RE CROSSED.
IT MAKES SENSE NOW.
THE SENATOR IS VERY PRINCIPLED. HE SAID HE'S WILLING TO SACRIFICE HIS DAUGHTER FOR THE OVERALL GOOD. BUT DEEP DOWN, HE CAN'T BE THINKING THAT.
THE KIDNAPPERS WANT THE U.S. GOVERNMENT TO RELEASE CANAN, THE DRUG LORD WHOM SENATOR WEEKES AND THE C.I.A. HELPED CATCH.
BESIDES, IT'S NOT JUST A MATTER OF KATHY ANYMORE--NOT WITH ALL THOSE BOMBS IN THE CITY.
IT WAS PAYBACK WHEN THEY KIDNAPPED THE SENATOR'S DAUGHTER AND STRAPPED THE BOMB TO HER.

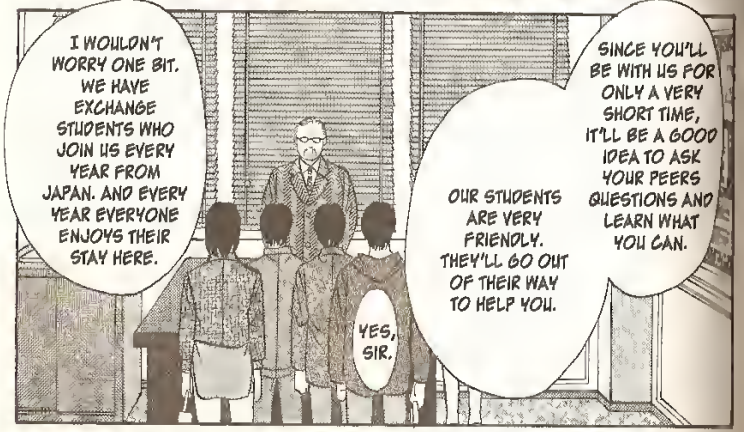

...YES. I'LL KEEP YOU POSTED.
...UH-HUH. EVERYTHING'S SET TO GO.
IT SHOULD GO ACCORDING TO PLAN.
GRIN
"No options"?
We have "options" all right.
In fact, they're already in the school.
They walked right through the front gates. Nobody even suspects they're agents.
Mind you, only our people are capable of that.
Now then.
PHEW.
CLICK
...UNDERSTOOD. I'LL STAY HERE.
...YES. YOU GET INFORMATION THE FASTEST IF YOU'RE ON THE FRONTLINES.
KATHY'S NEARING HER BREAKING POINT, THOUGH.
TWENTY-THREE, HERE. THEY DON'T HAVE ANYTHING WE DON'T ALREADY KNOW.
...NO. THEY STILL DON'T KNOW WHO THE RINGLEADER IS.
IT'S HARD PRETENDING TO BE CLUELESS.
HEH HEH
BIP

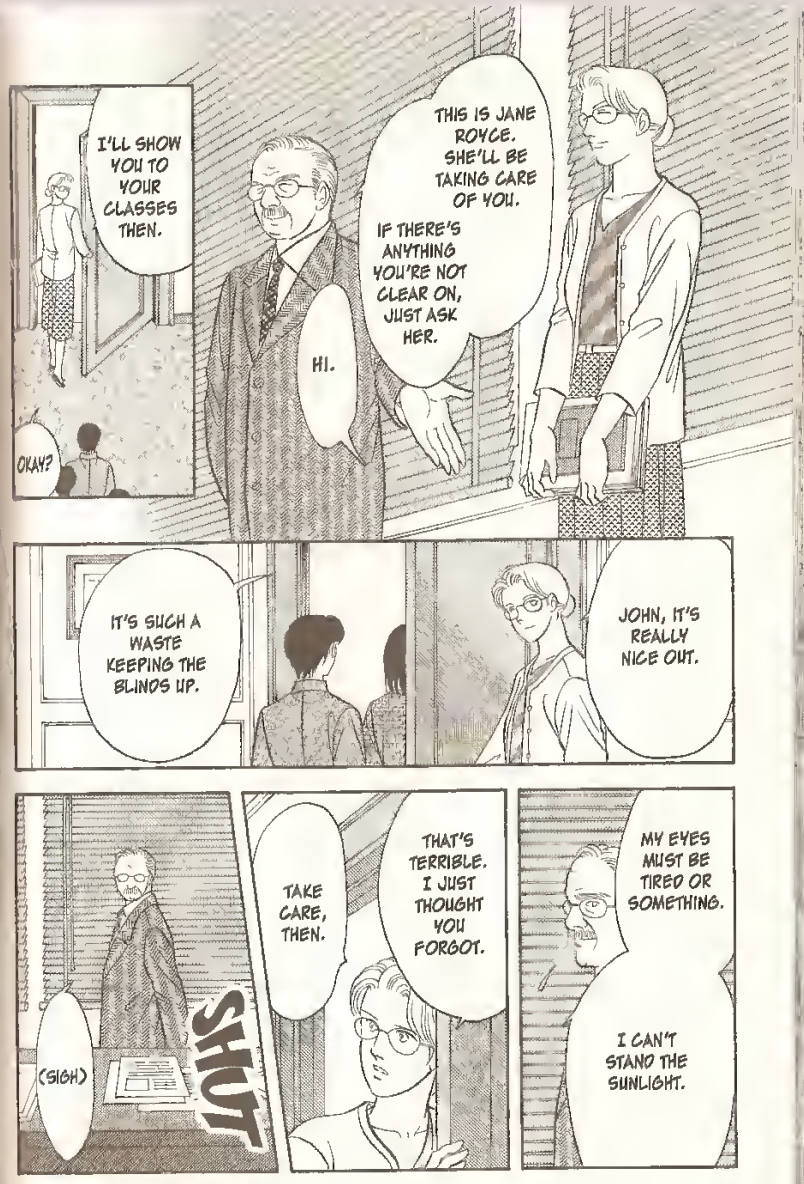

I've done what I can.
Let's see how good you are, #9.

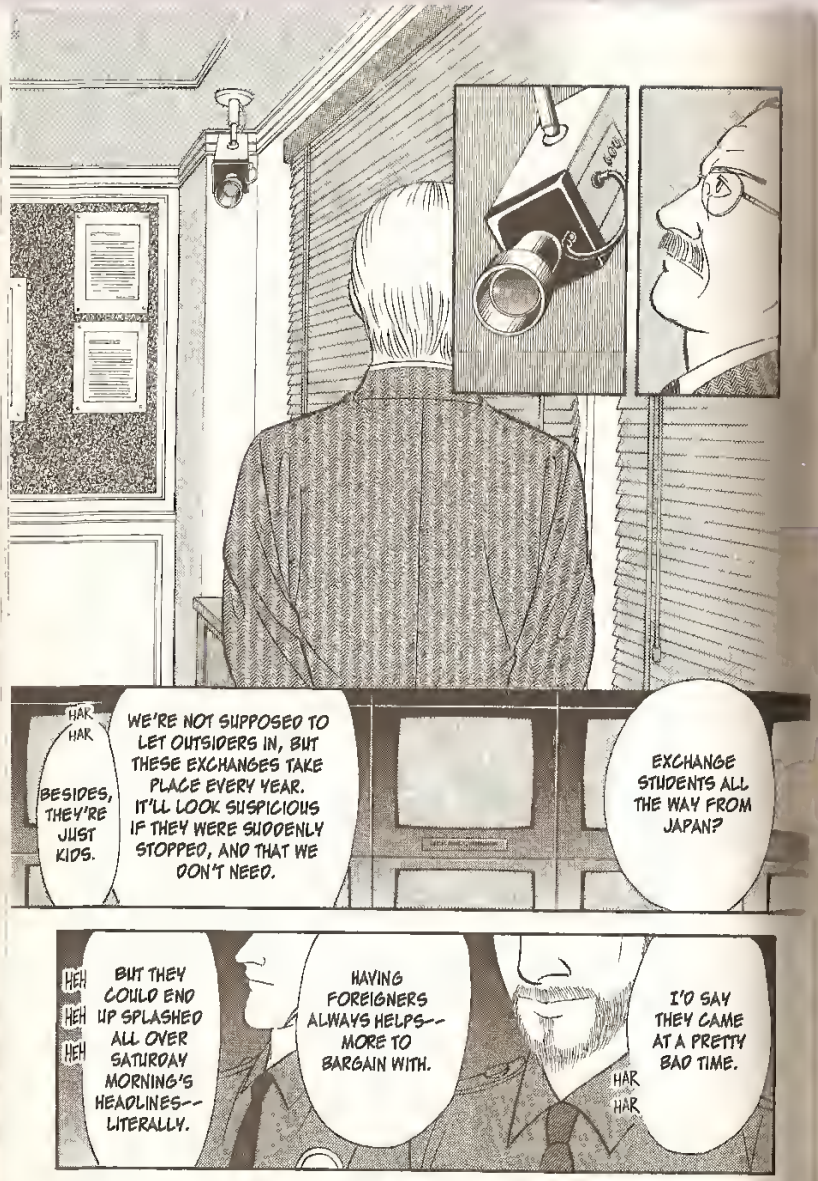

PRINCIPAL

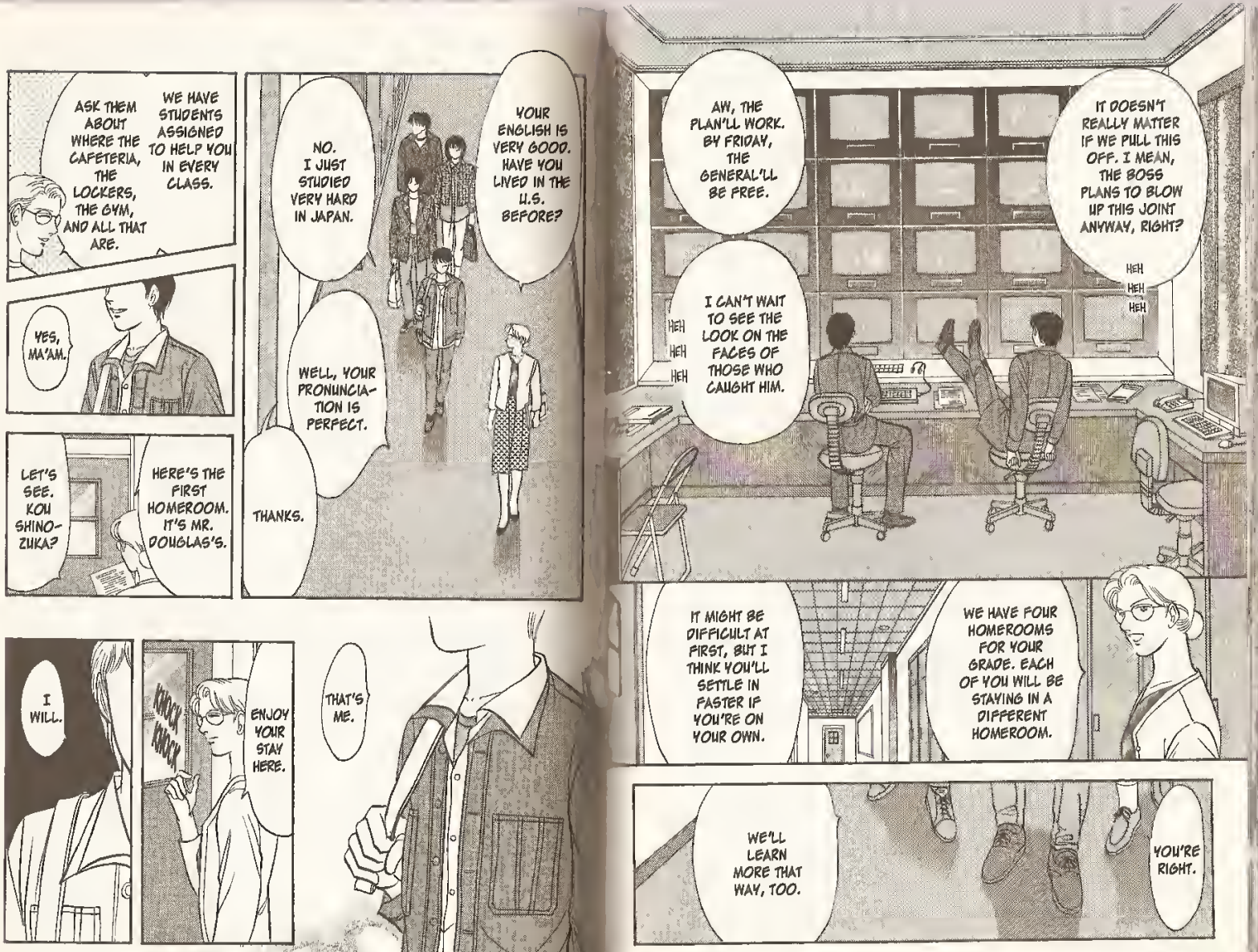

HAVE YOU GOTTEN USED TO LIFE IN THE U.S. YET?
ON BEHALF OF THE SCHOOL, I'D LIKE TO WELCOME YOU HERE. I'M JOHN HAYWARD, THE PRINCIPAL.
I SEE YOU'VE COME QUITE A WAY.


I SEE, I SEE.
WE JUST GOT HERE.
ER... NO.

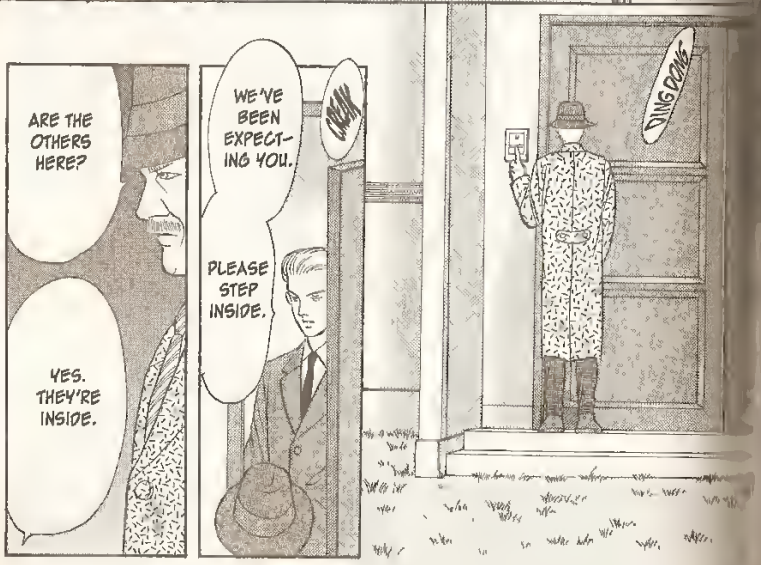

I WOULDN'T WORRY ONE BIT. WE HAVE EXCHANGE STUDENTS WHO JOIN US EVERY YEAR FROM JAPAN. AND EVERY YEAR EVERYONE ENJOYS THEIR STAY HERE.
SINCE YOU'LL BE WITH US FOR ONLY A VERY SHORT TIME, IT'LL BE A GOOD IDEA TO ASK YOUR PEERS QUESTIONS AND LEARN WHAT YOU CAN.
OUR STUDENTS ARE VERY FRIENDLY. THEY'LL GO OUT OF THEIR WAY TO HELP YOU.
YES, SIR.

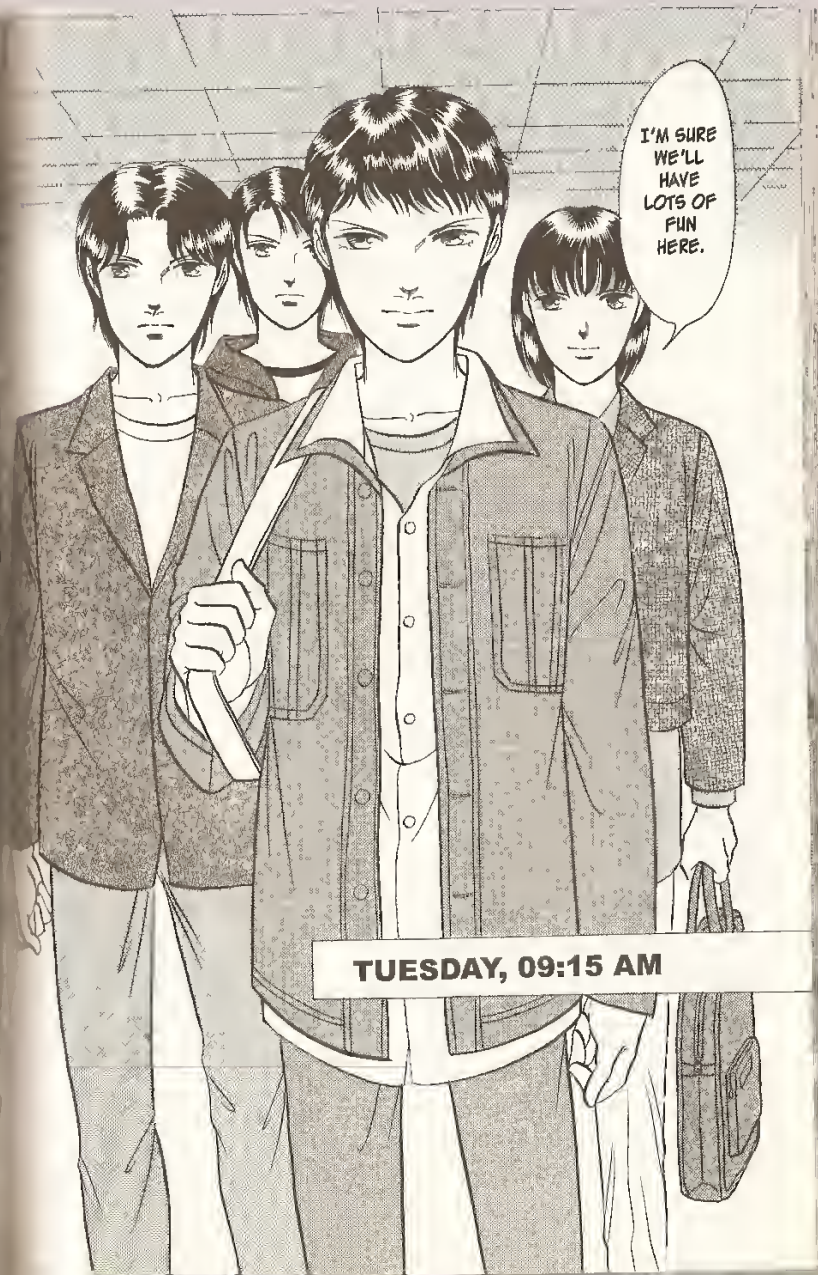

MY EYES MUST BE TIRED OR SOMETHING.
I CAN'T STAND THE SUNLIGHT.
THAT'S TERRIBLE. I JUST THOUGHT YOU FORGOT.
TAKE CARE, THEN.
SHUT
(SIGH)
JOHN, IT'S REALLY NICE OUT.
IT'S SUCH A WASTE KEEPING THE BLINDS UP.
THIS IS JANE ROYCE. SHE'LL BE TAKING CARE OF YOU.
IF THERE'S ANYTHING YOU'RE NOT CLEAR ON, JUST ASK HER.
HI.
I'LL SHOW YOU TO YOUR CLASSES THEN.
OKAY?

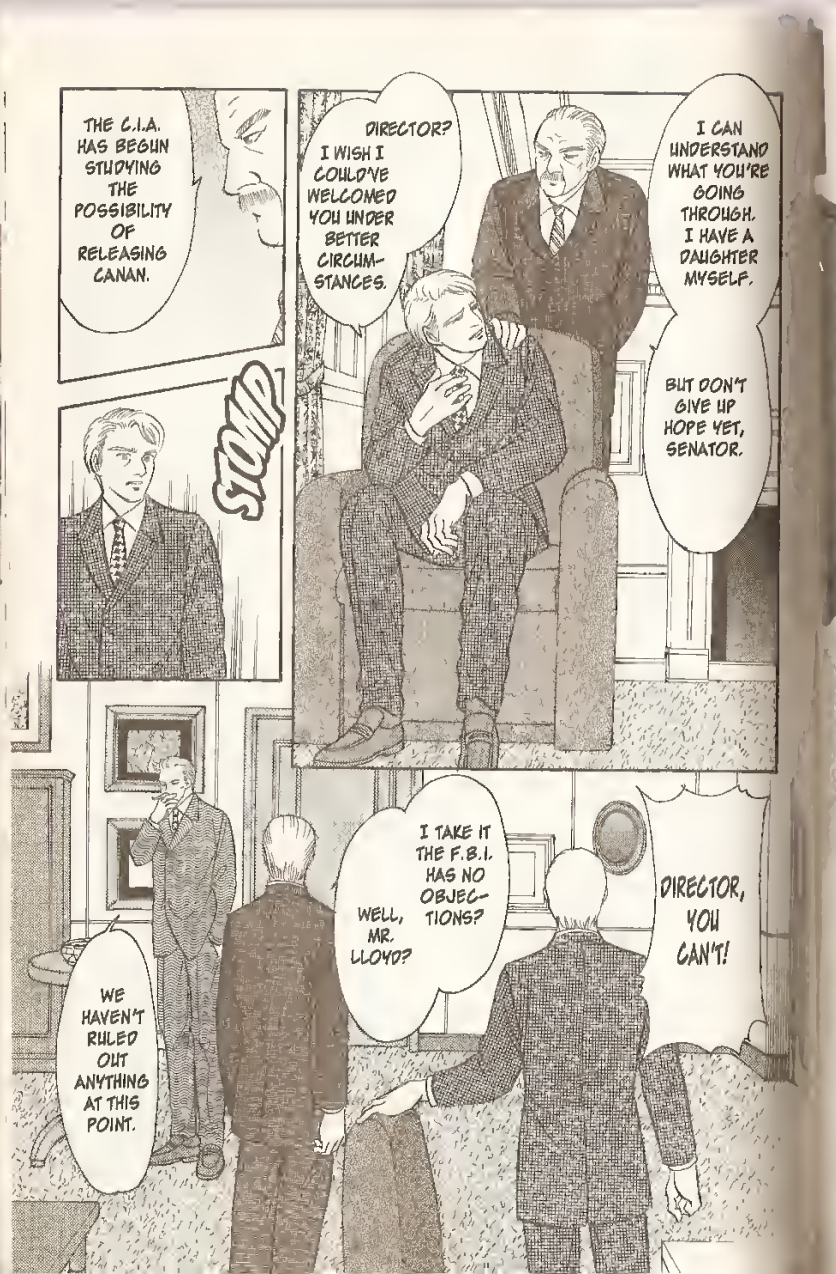

I'D SAY THEY CAME AT A PRETTY BAD TIME.
HAR HAR
HAVING FOREIGNERS ALWAYS HELPS--MORE TO BARGAIN WITH.
BUT THEY COULD END UP SPLASHED ALL OVER SATURDAY MORNING'S HEADLINES--LITERALLY.
HEH HEH HEH
EXCHANGE STUDENTS ALL THE WAY FROM JAPAN?
WE'RE NOT SUPPOSED TO LET OUTSIDERS IN, BUT THESE EXCHANGES TAKE PLACE EVERY YEAR. IT'LL LOOK SUSPICIOUS IF THEY WERE SUDDENLY STOPPED, AND THAT WE DON'T NEED.
HAR HAR
BESIDES, THEY'RE JUST KIDS.


IT DOESN'T REALLY MATTER IF WE PULL THIS OFF. I MEAN, THE BOSS PLANS TO BLOW UP THIS JOINT ANYWAY, RIGHT?
HEH HEH HEH
AW, THE PLAN'LL WORK. BY FRIDAY, THE GENERAL'LL BE FREE.
I CAN'T WAIT TO SEE THE LOOK ON THE FACES OF THOSE WHO CAUGHT HIM.
HEH HEH HEH
WE HAVE FOUR HOMEROOMS FOR YOUR GRADE. EACH OF YOU WILL BE STAYING IN A DIFFERENT HOMEROOM.
IT MIGHT BE DIFFICULT AT FIRST, BUT I THINK YOU'LL SETTLE IN FASTER IF YOU'RE ON YOUR OWN.
YOU'RE RIGHT.
WE'LL LEARN MORE THAT WAY, TOO.
YOUR ENGLISH IS VERY GOOD. HAVE YOU LIVED IN THE U.S. BEFORE?
NO. I JUST STUDIED VERY HARD IN JAPAN.
WELL, YOUR PRONUNCIATION IS PERFECT.
THANKS.
WE HAVE STUDENTS ASSIGNED TO HELP YOU IN EVERY CLASS.
ASK THEM ABOUT WHERE THE CAFETERIA, THE LOCKERS, THE GYM, AND ALL THAT ARE.
YES, MA'AM.
LET'S SEE. KOU SHINOZUKA?
HERE'S THE FIRST HOMEROOM. IT'S MR. DOUGLAS'S.
I WILL.
KNOCK KNOCK
ENJOY YOUR STAY HERE.
THAT'S ME.

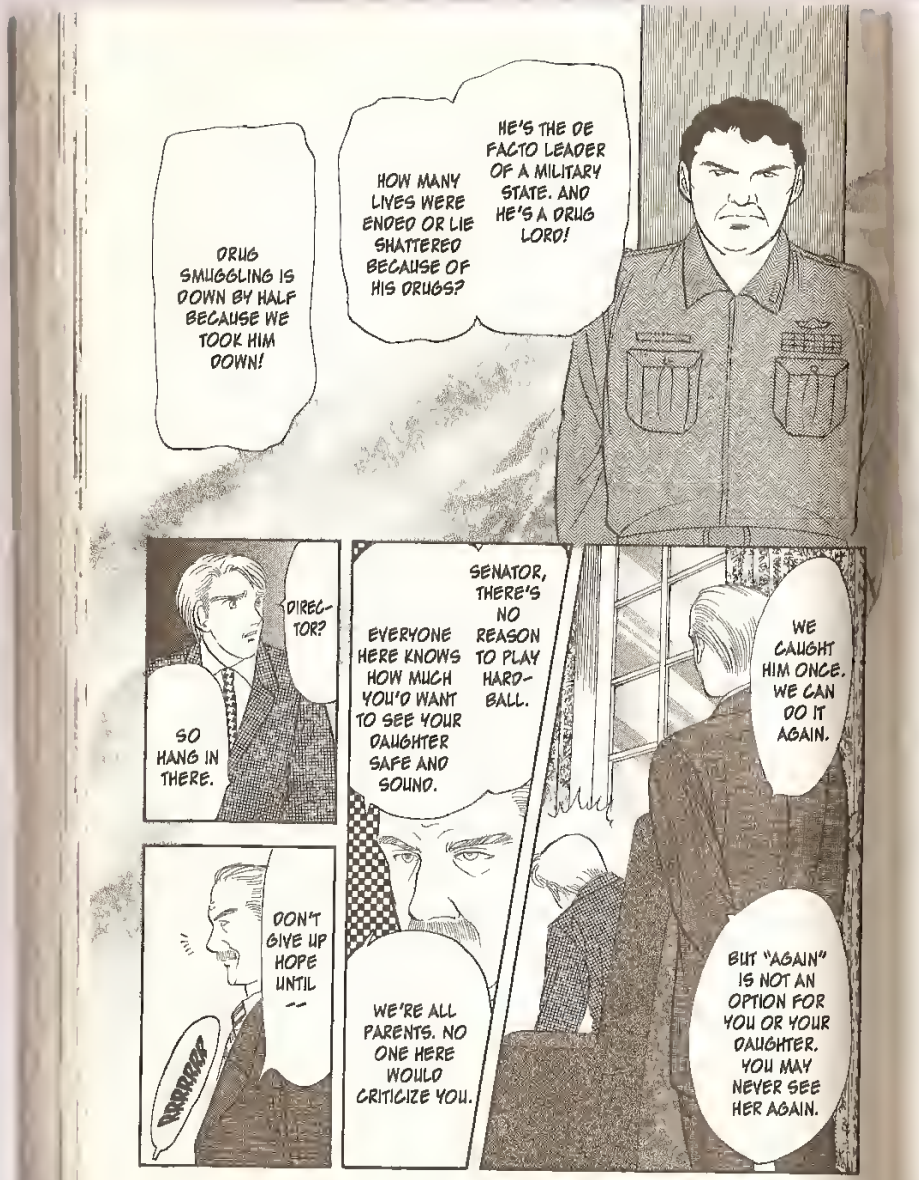


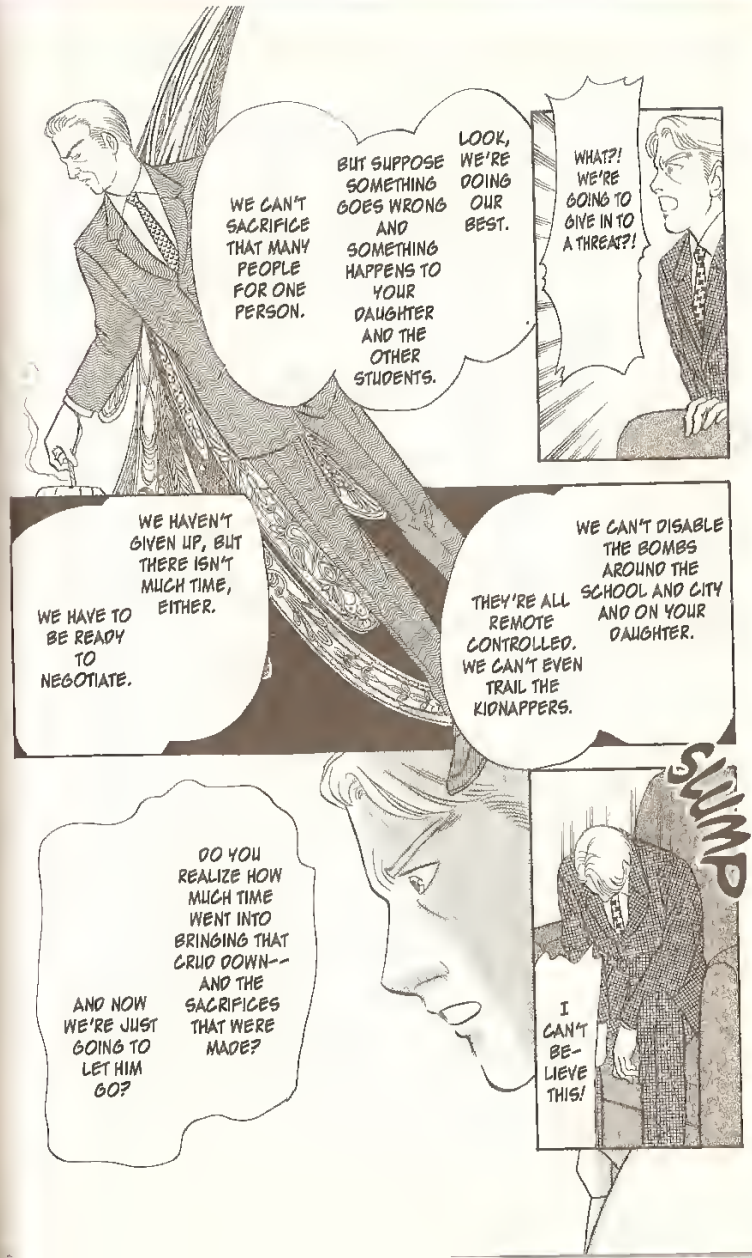

ARE THE OTHERS HERE?
YES. THEY'RE INSIDE.
WE'VE BEEN EXPECTING YOU.
CREAK
PLEASE STEP INSIDE.
DING DONG

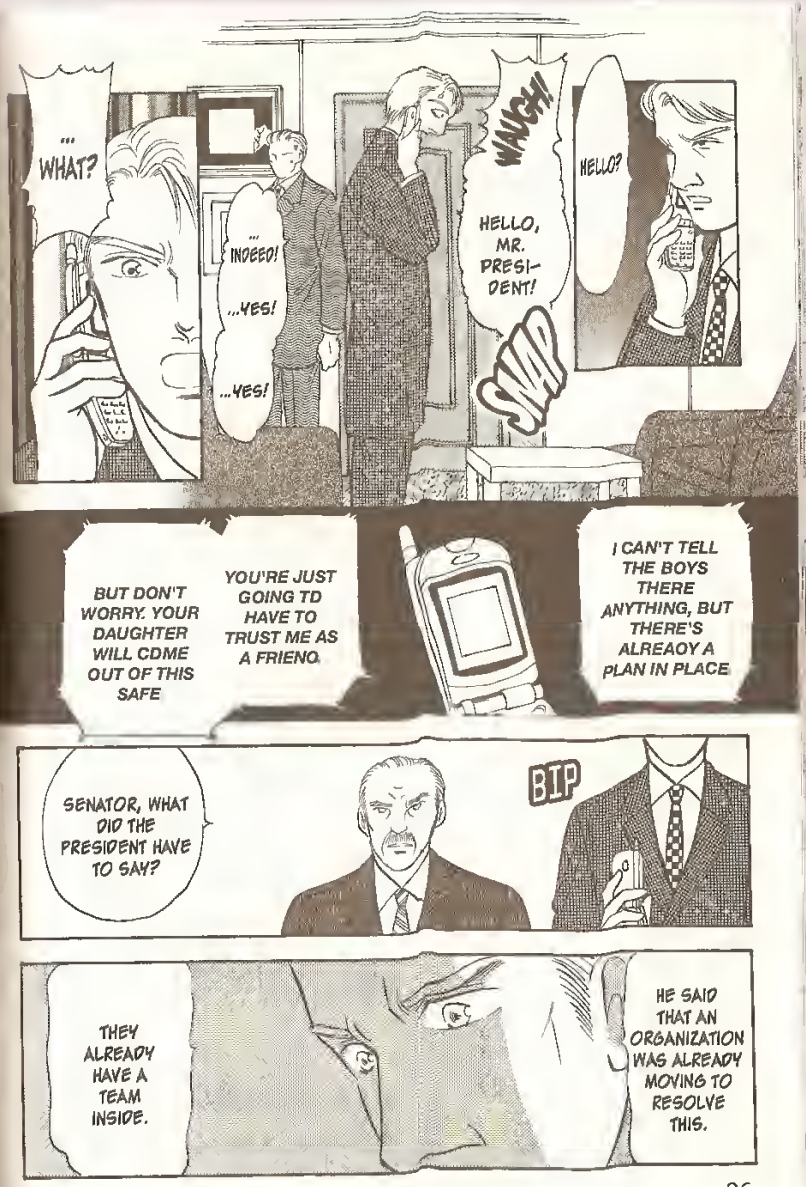

I'M SURE WE'LL HAVE LOTS OF FUN HERE.
TUESDAY, 09:15 AM


THE C.I.A. HAS BEGUN STUDYING THE POSSIBILITY OF RELEASING CANAN.
STOMP
DIRECTOR? I WISH I COULD'VE WELCOMED YOU UNDER BETTER CIRCUM-STANCES.
I CAN UNDERSTAND WHAT YOU'RE GOING THROUGH. I HAVE A DAUGHTER MYSELF.
BUT DON'T GIVE UP HOPE YET, SENATOR.
WE HAVEN'T RULED OUT ANYTHING AT THIS POINT.
WELL, MR. LLOYD?
I TAKE IT THE F.B.I. HAS NO OBJEC-TIONS?
DIRECTOR, YOU CAN'T!

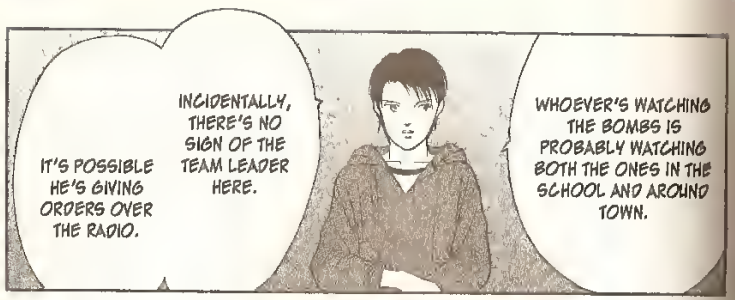

DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT. WE HAVE TO KEEP A VERY TIGHT LID ON THIS.
IF ANYTHING, I'M SORRY WE HAVE TO HOLD THIS MEETING SO FAR OUT OF WASHINGTON.
AH, YOU'RE FINALLY HERE.
SORRY I'M LATE.
DIRECTOR, YOUR COAT?
AH. THANK YOU.
NO, NO. IT'S BETTER TO BE EXTRA CAREFUL HERE.
OVER THERE.
SENATOR WEEKES?


DRUG SMUGGLING IS DOWN BY HALF BECAUSE WE TOOK HIM DOWN!
HOW MANY LIVES WERE ENDED OR LIE SHATTERED BECAUSE OF HIS DRUGS?
HE'S THE DE FACTO LEADER OF A MILITARY STATE. AND HE'S A DRUG LORD!
DIREC-TOR?
SO HANG IN THERE.
EVERYONE HERE KNOWS HOW MUCH YOU'D WANT TO SEE YOUR DAUGHTER SAFE AND SOUND.
SENATOR, THERE'S NO REASON TO PLAY HARD-BALL.
WE CAUGHT HIM ONCE. WE CAN DO IT AGAIN.
DON'T GIVE UP HOPE UNTIL --
RRRRRRR
WE'RE ALL PARENTS. NO ONE HERE WOULD CRITICIZE YOU.
BUT "AGAIN" IS NOT AN OPTION FOR YOU OR YOUR DAUGHTER. YOU MAY NEVER SEE HER AGAIN.


WE CAN'T SACRIFICE THAT MANY PEOPLE FOR ONE PERSON.
BUT SUPPOSE SOMETHING GOES WRONG AND SOMETHING HAPPENS TO YOUR DAUGHTER AND THE OTHER STUDENTS.
LOOK, WE'RE DOING OUR BEST.
WHAT?! WE'RE GOING TO GIVE IN TO A THREAT?!
WE HAVEN'T GIVEN UP, BUT THERE ISN'T MUCH TIME, EITHER.
WE HAVE TO BE READY TO NEGOTIATE.
THEY'RE ALL REMOTE CONTROLLED. WE CAN'T EVEN TRAIL THE KIDNAPPERS.
WE CAN'T DISABLE THE BOMBS AROUND THE SCHOOL AND CITY AND ON YOUR DAUGHTER.
SLUMP
DO YOU REALIZE HOW MUCH TIME WENT INTO BRINGING THAT CRUD DOWN-- AND THE SACRIFICES THAT WERE MADE?
AND NOW WE'RE JUST GOING TO LET HIM GO?
I CAN'T BE-LIEVE THIS!

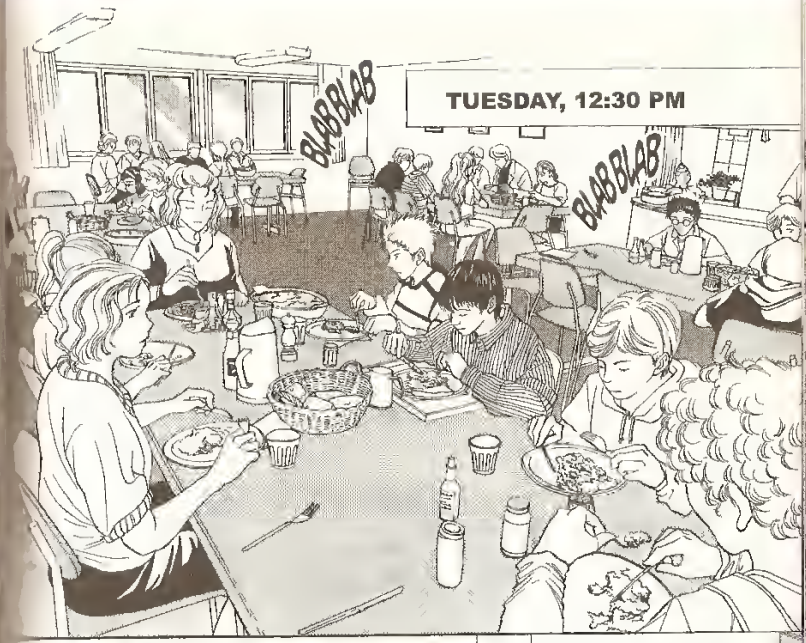

...
WHAT?
HELLO?
HELLO, MR. PRESI-DENT!
...INDEED!
...YES!
...YES!
SNAP
I CAN'T TELL THE BOYS THERE ANYTHING, BUT THERE'S ALREAOY A PLAN IN PLACE.
YOU'RE JUST GOING TD HAVE TO TRUST ME AS A FRIENO.
BUT DON'T WORRY. YOUR DAUGHTER WILL CDME OUT OF THIS SAFE
SENATOR, WHAT DID THE PRESIDENT HAVE TO SAY?
BIP
THEY ALREADY HAVE A TEAM INSIDE.
HE SAID THAT AN ORGANIZATION WAS ALREADY MOVING TO RESOLVE THIS.

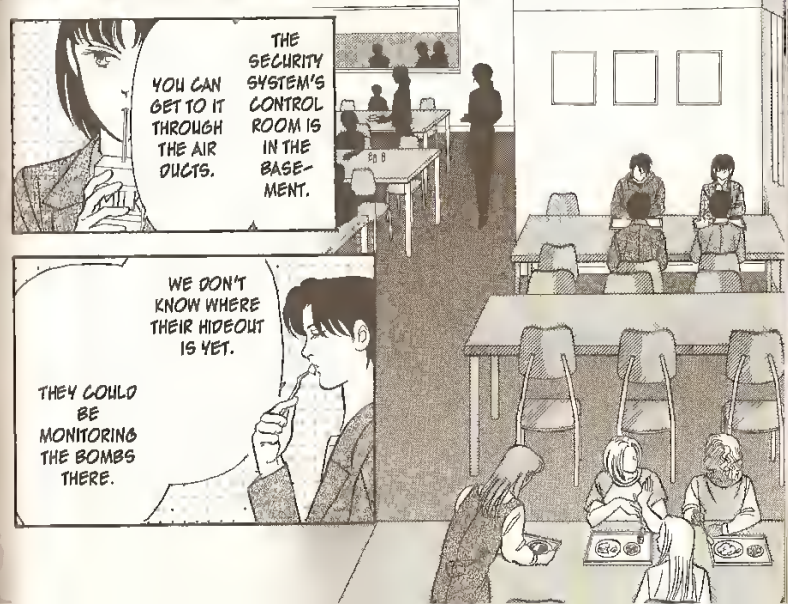

WHAT?! I WASN'T TOLD ANYTHING ABOUT THIS!
WHAT ORGANIZA-TION IS IT?
THEY ALREADY HAVE A TEAM INSIDE? WERE THERE ANY REPORTS OF ANYONE GETTING IN?
NO, SIR! THE SCHOOL'S WATCHED AROUND THE CLOCK. JUST STUDENTS AND TEACHERS.
THE PRESIDENT DIDN'T SAY.
ACTUALLY, IT WAS MORE LIKE HE WASN'T AT LIBERTY TO SAY.
THEN JUST WHO ON EARTH WAS ABLE TO GET PAST THE SCHOOL'S TIGHT SECURITY SYSTEM?
THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE. HE HAS TO KEEP IT SECRET-- EVEN FROM US?!

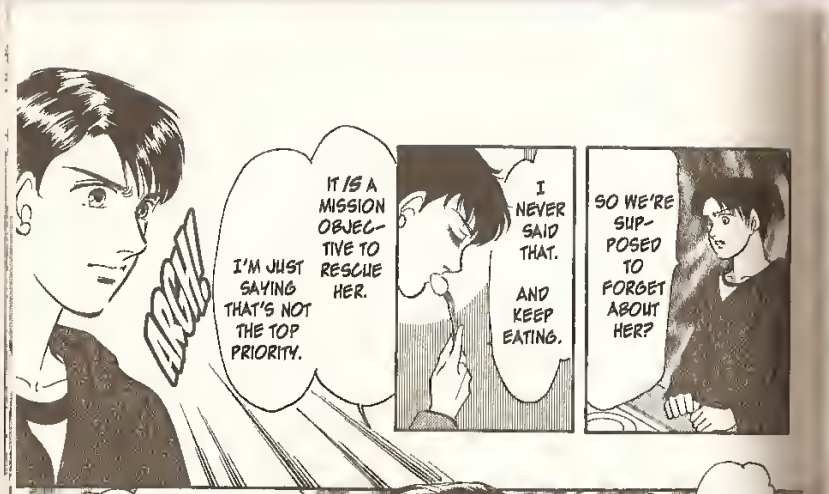

IT'S POSSIBLE HE'S GIVING ORDERS OVER THE RADIO.
INCIDENTALLY, THERE'S NO SIGN OF THE TEAM LEADER HERE.
WHOEVER'S WATCHING THE BOMBS IS PROBABLY WATCHING BOTH THE ONES IN THE SCHOOL AND AROUND TOWN.


WE BEGIN OPERATIONS.
MILK
THAT'S IT FOR THE REPORTS?
AH, RIGHT. SORRY.
DON'T STOP EATING, 21.
IT LOOKS SUSPICIOUS.

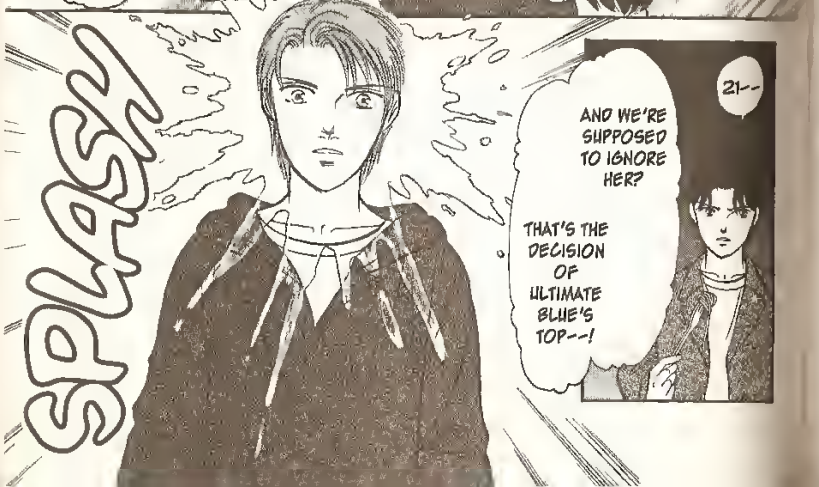


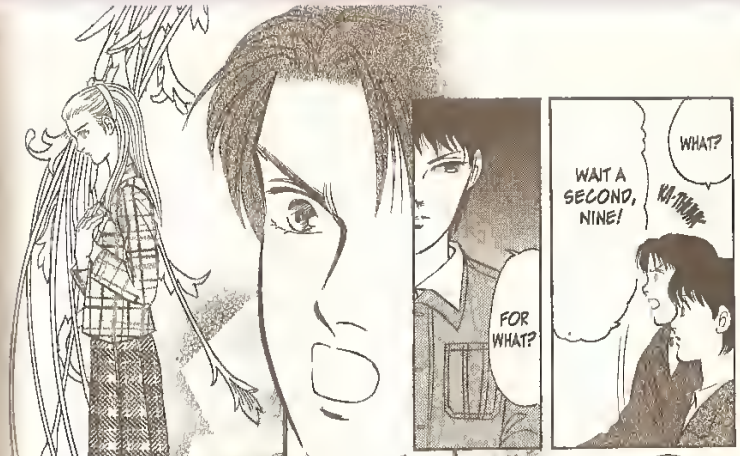

BLABBLAB
BLABBLAB
TUESDAY, 12:30 PM

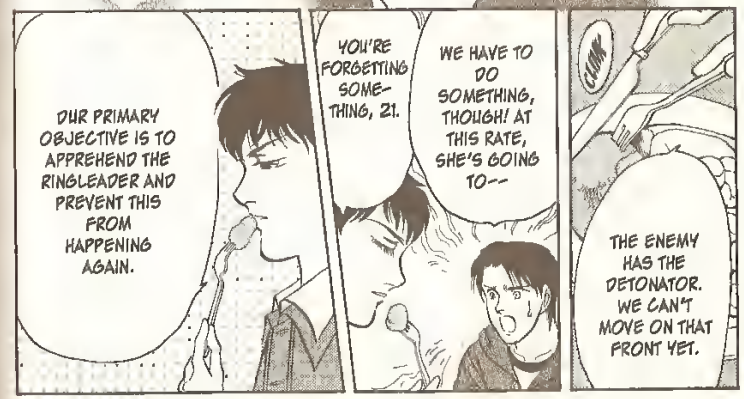

YOU CAN GET TO IT THROUGH THE AIR DUCTS.
THE SECURITY SYSTEM'S CONTROL ROOM IS IN THE BASEMENT.
WE DON'T KNOW WHERE THEIR HIDEOUT IS YET.
THEY COULD BE MONITORING THE BOMBS THERE.


ARGH!
IT IS A MISSION OBJECTIVE TO RESCUE HER.
I'M JUST SAYING THAT'S NOT THE TOP PRIORITY.
I NEVER SAID THAT.
AND KEEP EATING.
SO WE'RE SUPPOSED TO FORGET ABOUT HER?

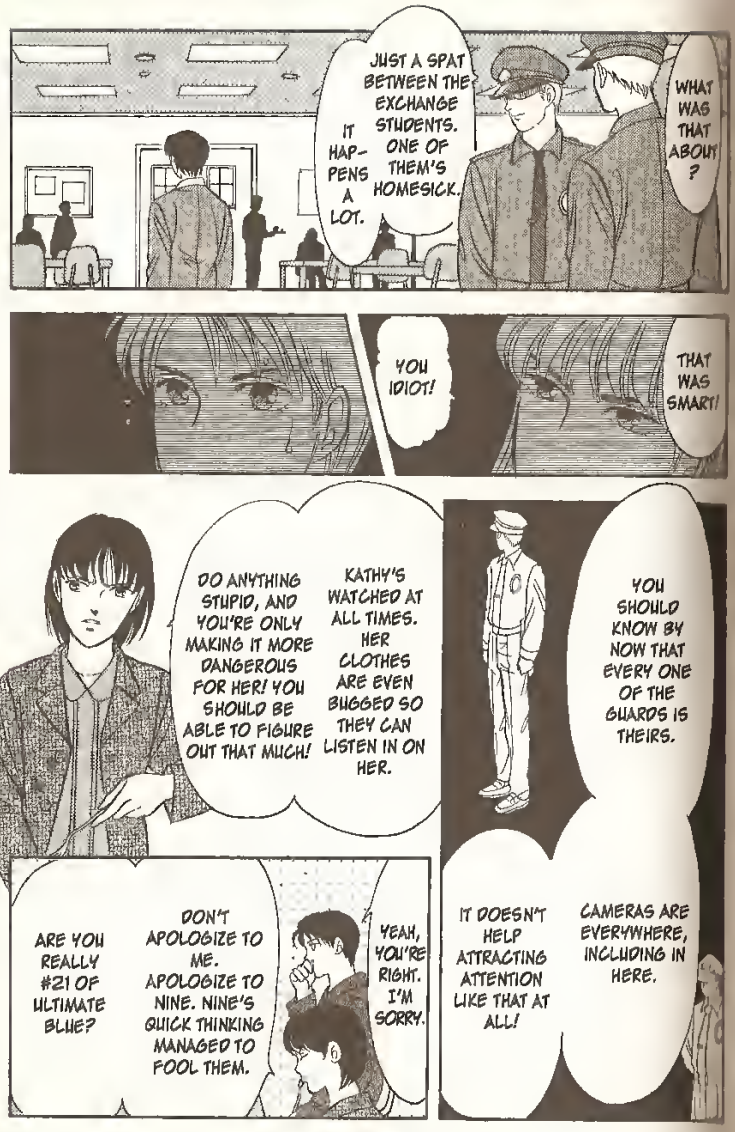

YOU WENT THROUGH THE SAME TRAINING WE DID! SO YOUR KNOWLEDGE OF PSYCHOLOGY AND ALL THAT SHOULD TELL YOU THAT SHE'S ON THE EDGE OF A COMPLETE BREAKDOWN!
SHE'S NOT GOING TO LAST AT THIS RATE!
CALM DOWN, 21!
IT'S THE SAME THING!

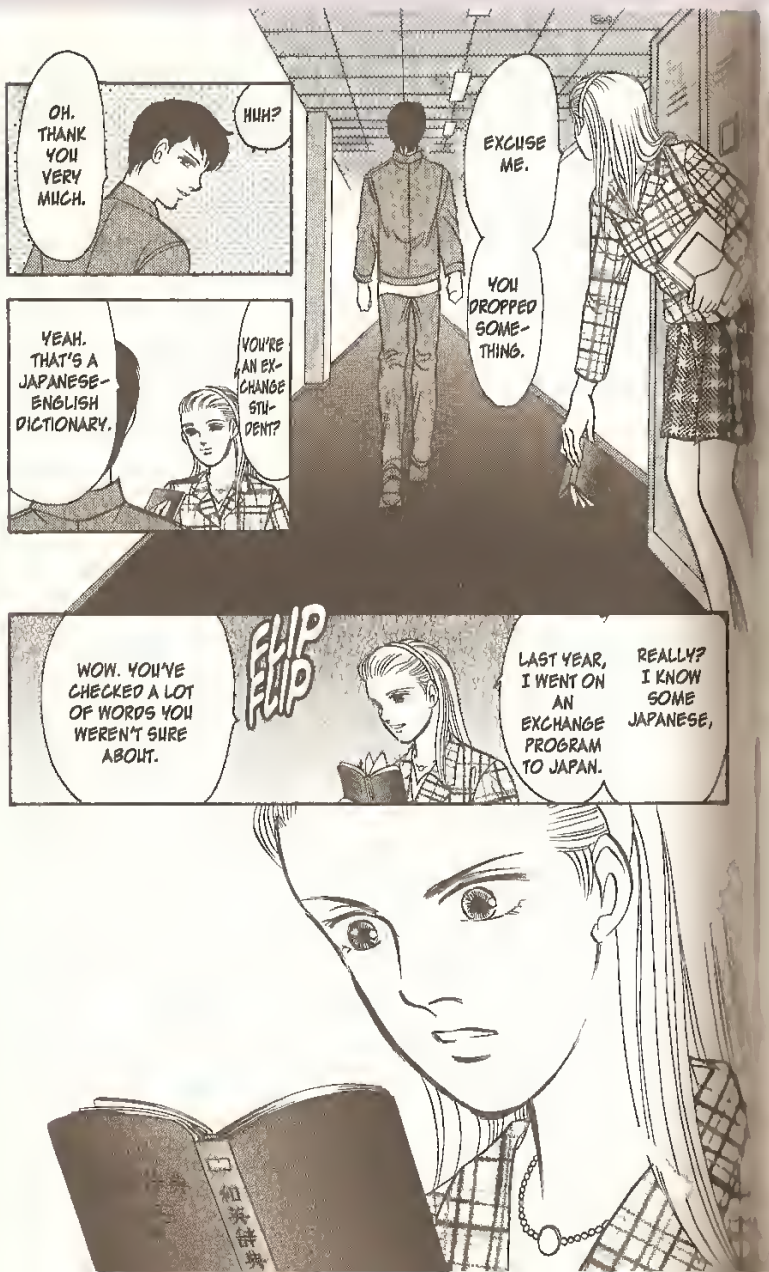

SPLASH
21--
AND WE'RE SUPPOSED TO IGNORE HER?
THAT'S THE DECISION OF ULTIMATE BLUE'S TOP--!

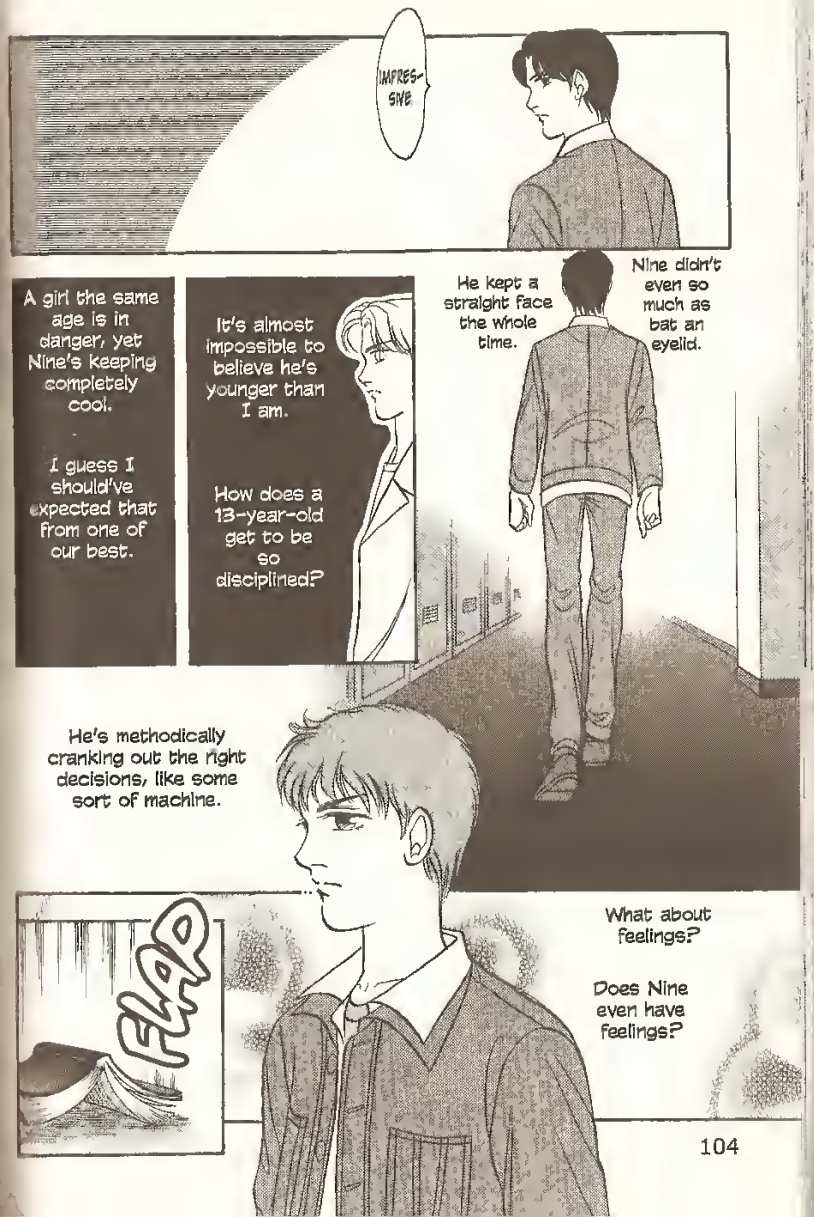

FOR WHAT?
WAIT A SECOND, NINE!
WHAT?
KI-THWK
SHE'S IN YOUR HOME-ROOM.
YOU CAN'T JUST IGNORE HER.
THE GIRL-- I MEAN KATHY.


OUR PRIMARY OBJECTIVE IS TO APPREHEND THE RINGLEADER AND PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.
YOU'RE FORGETTING SOME-THING, 21.
WE HAVE TO DO SOMETHING, THOUGH! AT THIS RATE, SHE'S GOING TO--
CLANK
THE ENEMY HAS THE DETONATOR. WE CAN'T MOVE ON THAT FRONT YET.

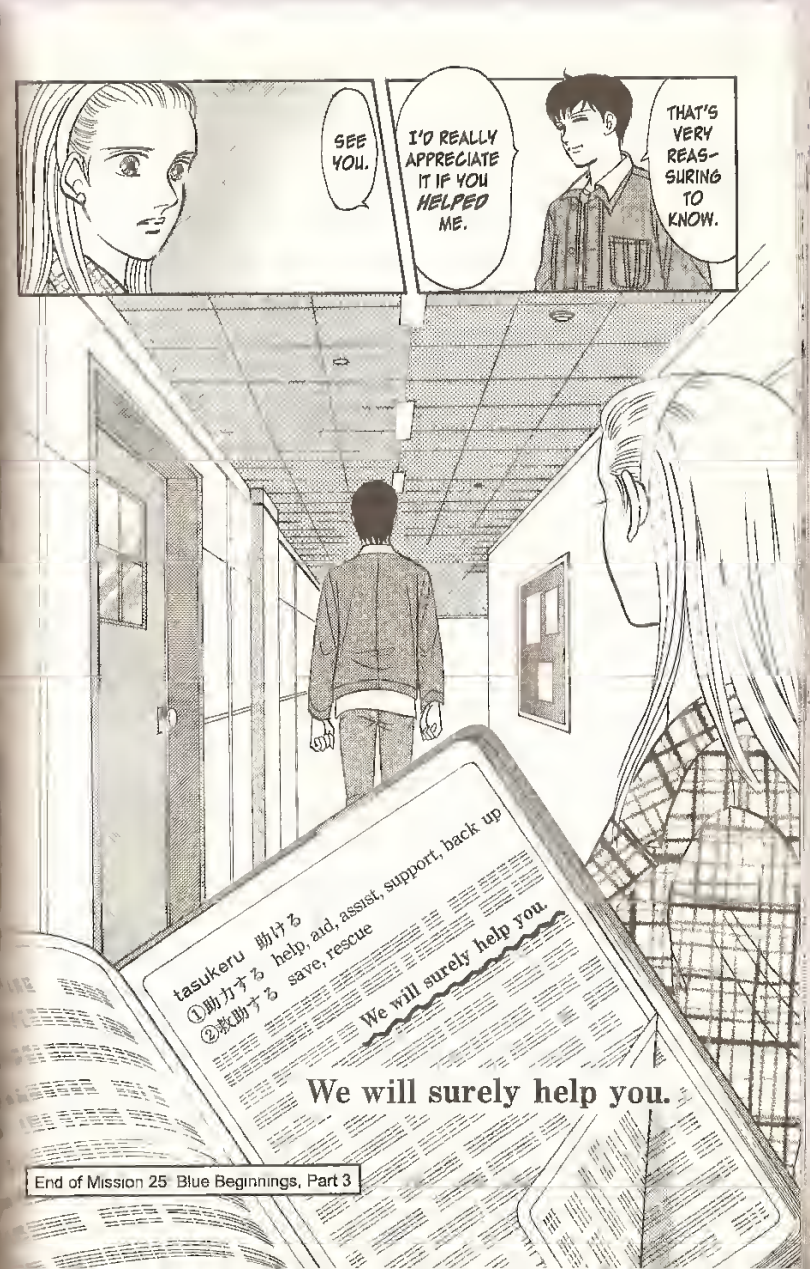

(GULP)
YOU SHOULDN'T FIGHT AMONG FRIENDS FROM HOME.
I GOT ANGRY BECAUSE HE STARTED WHINING ABOUT GOING BACK.
THANKS, THOUGH.
I'M SORRY ABOUT THE MESS.
WHERE CAN I FIND A MOP?
YOU'LL FIND ONE UNDER THE STAIRS.
SWISH


IT HAPPENS A LOT.
JUST A SPAT BETWEEN THE EXCHANGE STUDENTS. ONE OF THEM'S HOMESICK.
WHAT WAS THAT ABOUT?
YOU IDIOT!
THAT WAS SMART!
DO ANYTHING STUPID, AND YOU'RE ONLY MAKING IT MORE DANGEROUS FOR HER! YOU SHOULD BE ABLE TO FIGURE OUT THAT MUCH!
KATHY'S WATCHED AT ALL TIMES. HER CLOTHES ARE EVEN BUGGED SO THEY CAN LISTEN IN ON HER.
YOU SHOULD KNOW BY NOW THAT EVERY ONE OF THE GUARDS IS THEIRS.
ARE YOU REALLY #21 OF ULTIMATE BLUE?
DON'T APOLOGIZE TO ME. APOLOGIZE TO NINE. NINE'S QUICK THINKING MANAGED TO FOOL THEM.
YEAH, YOU'RE RIGHT. I'M SORRY.
IT DOESN'T HELP ATTRACTING ATTENTION LIKE THAT AT ALL!
CAMERAS ARE EVERYWHERE, INCLUDING IN HERE.


EXCUSE ME.
YOU DROPPED SOMETHING.
HUH?
OH. THANK YOU VERY MUCH.
YEAH. THAT'S A JAPANESE-ENGLISH DICTIONARY.
YOU'RE AN EXCHANGE STUDENT?
FLIP FLIP
WOW. YOU'VE CHECKED A LOT OF WORDS YOU WEREN'T SURE ABOUT.
LAST YEAR, I WENT ON AN EXCHANGE PROGRAM TO JAPAN.
REALLY? I KNOW SOME JAPANESE,

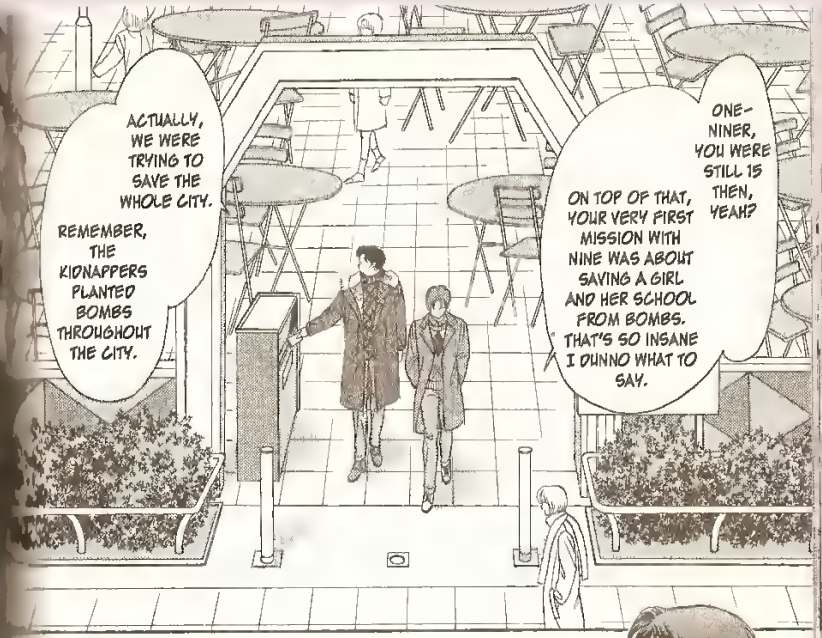

IMPRESSIVE
A girl the same age is in danger, yet Nine's keeping completely cool.
I guess I should've expected that from one of our best.
It's almost impossible to believe he's younger than I am.
How does a 13-year-old get to be so disciplined?
He kept a straight face the whole time.
Nine didn't even so much as bat an eyelid.
He's methodically cranking out the right decisions, like some sort of machine.
FLAP
What about feelings?
Does Nine even have feelings?





End of Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 3


ARE ALL U.B. AGENTS AS CALM AND COLLECTED AS YOU ARE?
WELL, I...I... I GUESS.
THINK ABOUT IT. YOU HAVE ONE OF THE TOP ULTIMATE BLUE AGENTS CALLING THE SHOTS, BUT SHE'S YOUNGER THAN YOU ARE AT ONLY 13.
HOW CAN YOU NOT TAKE AN INTEREST?
REMEMBER? TWENTY-ONE?
WE'RE CONDITIONED TO BE COOL UNDER FIRE. BUT SOME OF US GET PRETTY EMOTIONAL.
(SIGH)
YEAH, YEAH.
HE'D KNOWINGLY RUSH RECKLESSLY INTO THINGS. HE WAS JUST LIKE YOU ON THAT ACCOUNT.
SHE WAS LIKE A MACHINE--METHODICAL, UNFEELING.
NINE WAS...HOW TO PUT IT?


ACTUALLY, WE WERE TRYING TO SAVE THE WHOLE CITY.
REMEMBER, THE KIDNAPPERS PLANTED BOMBS THROUGHOUT THE CITY.
ONE-NINER, YOU WERE STILL 15 THEN, YEAH?
ON TOP OF THAT, YOUR VERY FIRST MISSION WITH NINE WAS ABOUT SAVING A GIRL AND HER SCHOOL FROM BOMBS. THAT'S SO INSANE I DUNNO WHAT TO SAY.


INTERESTING TO SEE?
YOU'RE A "TWO." I SHOULD'VE EXPECTED THAT.
NINE WAS EVEN MORE UNREAL.
SO IT WAS INTERESTING TO SEE HOW SHE'D HANDLE THINGS.
YOU'RE WRONG ON THAT POINT.
OUR TRAINING IS UNREAL. I MAY HAVE BEEN 15, BUT I'D ALREADY SEEN PLENTY OF ACTION.
WEREN'T YOU, LIKE, NERVOUS? SURE, YOU WERE PART OF AN ELITE TEAM. BUT COME ON, YOU PROBABLY WEREN'T THAT EXPERIENCED.


APPEARANCES DON'T MATTER.
NINE WAS... WELL, NINE.
2-1. THAT, OF COURSE, WAS A BIG MISTAKE.
IN OUR HEADS, WE KNEW THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE NUMBER.
BUT DEEP DOWN, WE PROBABLY SAW HER AS A 13-YEAR-OLD CHILD.
WE COULDN'T SEE HER FOR WHO SHE WAS.
WE FOUND OUT BIG TIME.
SHE EMPHATICALLY SHOWED US HOW GOOD OUR "ONES" REALLY ARE.

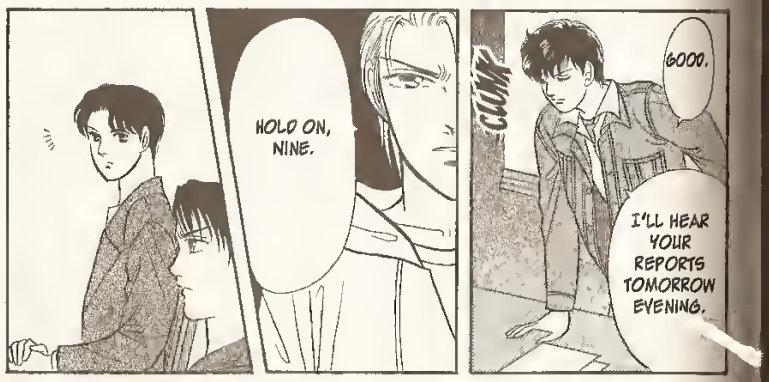

ARRRGH
GIMME A BREAK.
DON'T GET ME WRONG. I THINK YOU'RE SOMETHING, KEEPING UP WITH NINE.
THAT'S WHY YOU HIT ON HER DESPITE THE RISKS, ISN'T IT?
THAT'S NOT TRUE.
IT MAY LOOK AS THOUGH SHE'S UNCARING, BUT DEEP DOWN--
WE DIDN'T KNOW IT THEN, THOUGH.
SO 21, WHO COULD GET PRETTY WORKED UP, OFTEN DISAGREED WITH NINE.
OF COURSE, WE KNOW NOW.
THE REAL NINE EXISTS UNDERNEATH THAT STEELY FAÇADE.
UH-HUH.
REALLY?

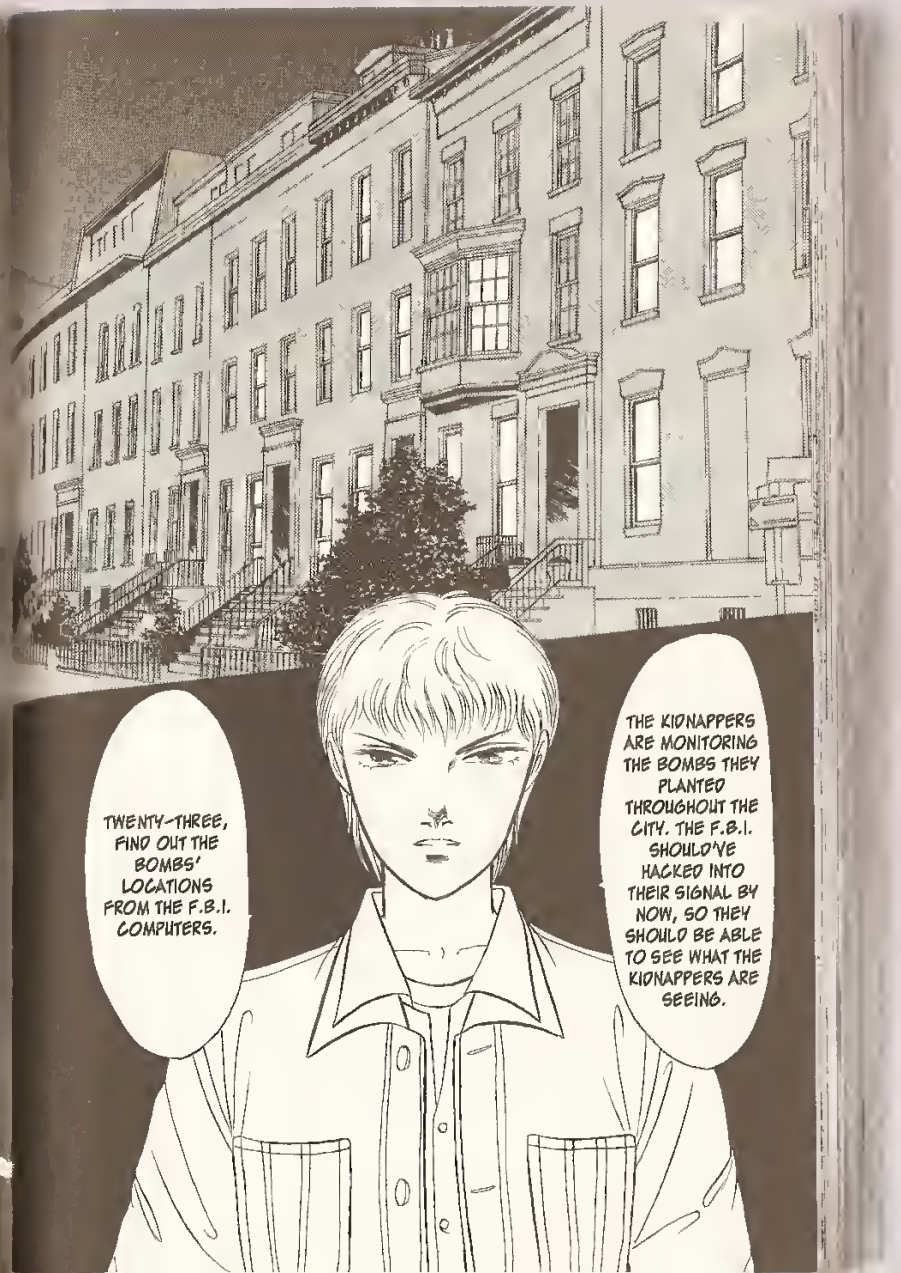


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Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 4


EVERYONE ELSE IS TO MARK THE KIDNAPPERS IN THE SCHOOL.
WE'VE KNOWN ABOUT THE GENERAL'S ORGANIZATION FOR A LONG TIME. YOU SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH EVERY ONE OF HIS MEN.
YOU BET.
WE MEMORIZED THE FILES ON THE THOUSANDS OF MEN WHO HAVE ANYTHING TO DO WITH HIS ORGANIZATION.
OF COURSE.


HOLD ON, NINE.
GOOD.
CLUNK
I'LL HEAR YOUR REPORTS TOMORROW EVENING.

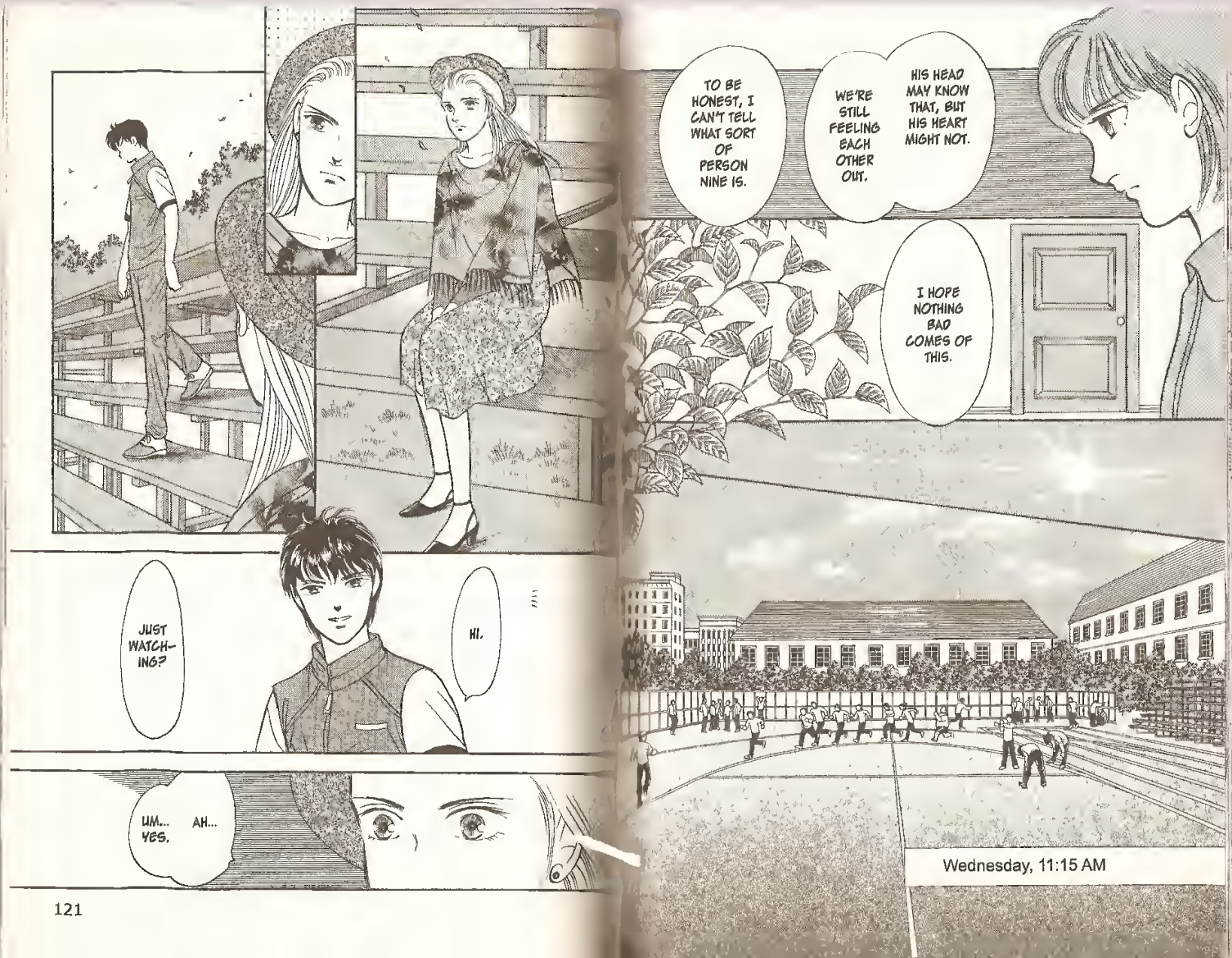

TWENTY-THREE, FIND OUT THE BOMBS' LOCATIONS FROM THE F.B.I. COMPUTERS.
THE KIDNAPPERS ARE MONITORING THE BOMBS THEY PLANTED THROUGHOUT THE CITY. THE F.B.I. SHOULD'VE HACKED INTO THEIR SIGNAL BY NOW, SO THEY SHOULD BE ABLE TO SEE WHAT THE KIDNAPPERS ARE SEEING.

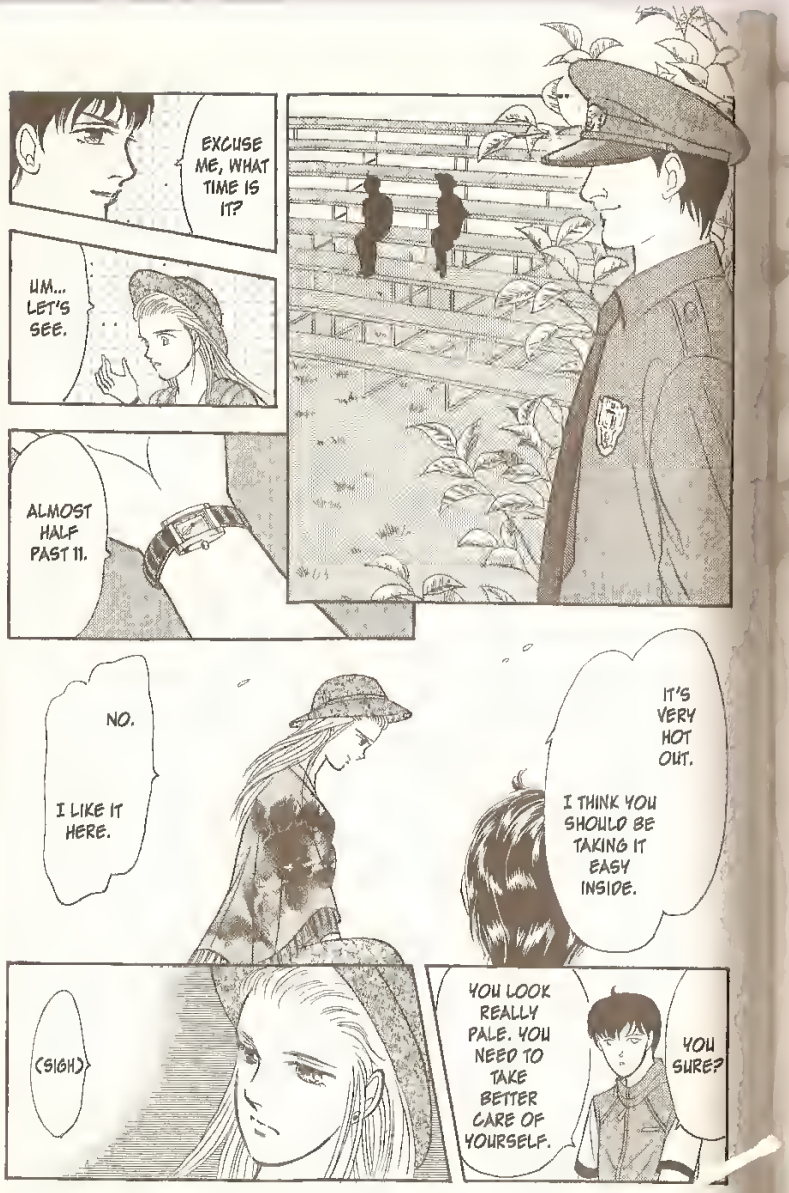

I HAVE A HARD TIME EVEN BELIEVING YOU'RE A "TWO."
WHAT DID THEY TEACH YOU?! JUST BECAUSE YOU'RE A "TWO" YOU CAN STOP CARING?!
CALM DOWN?!
YOU GUYS ARE SO INHUMAN!
THERE'S A GIRL OUR AGE WHO'S SUFFERING!
SAY WHAT?!
THE "TWOS" ARE NEXT IN COMMAND AFTER THE "ONES." AGE, GENDER, NATIONALITY. ALL THAT DOESN'T MATTER. WE'RE CHOSEN STRICTLY FOR OUR ABILITIES.
IT ALSO MEANS OUR MISSIONS ARE THAT MUCH HARDER AND OUR RESPONSIBILITIES THAT MUCH BIGGER.
YOU'RE ACTING ON IMPULSE. YOU'RE LOSING SIGHT OF WHAT YOU HAVE TO DO.
THAT MAKES YOU UNFIT FOR THIS MISSION.

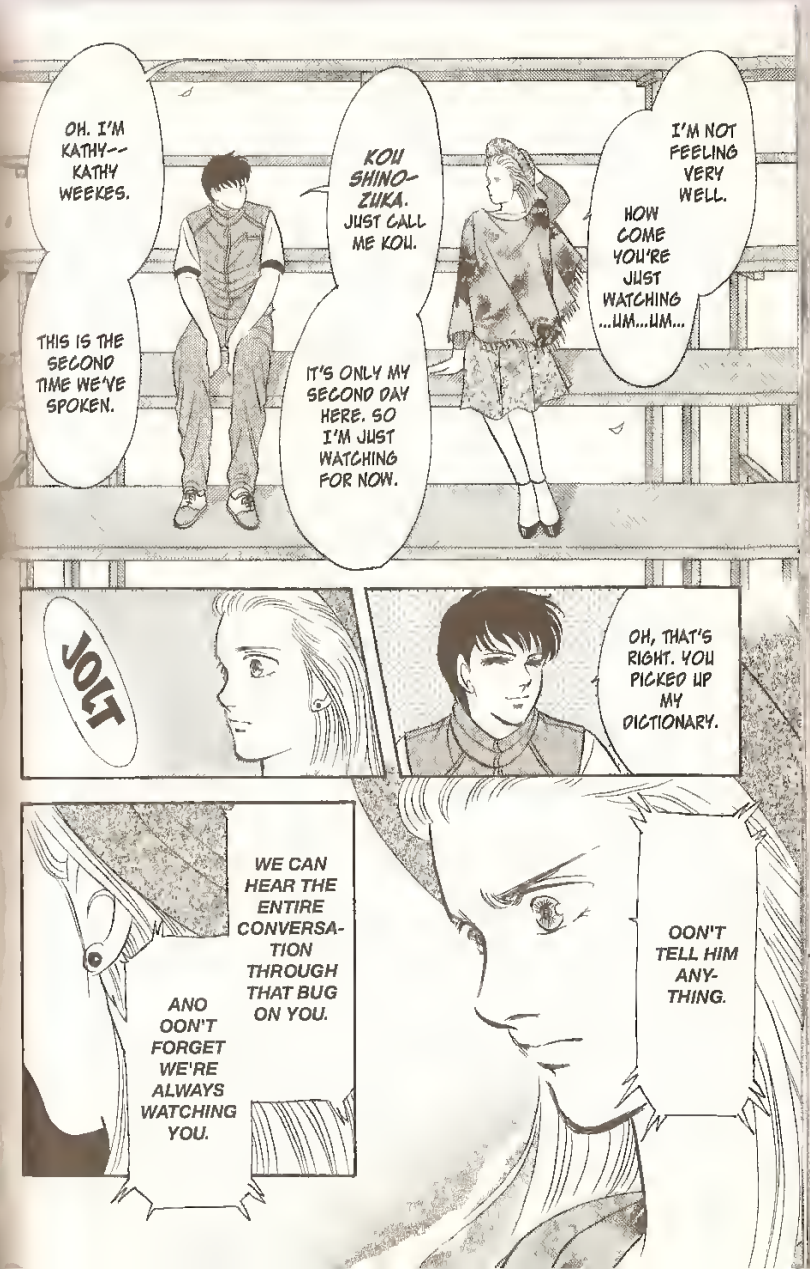

WE'RE JUST GOING TO LEAVE HER IN THAT STATE?!
WHAT ABOUT KATHY?
CONTINUE WITH YOUR ASSIGNMENTS.
(SIGH)
HEY! WAIT A SECOND, NINE!
NINE!
OF ALL THE...!
SLUMP
CALM DOWN.
TWENTY-ONE?

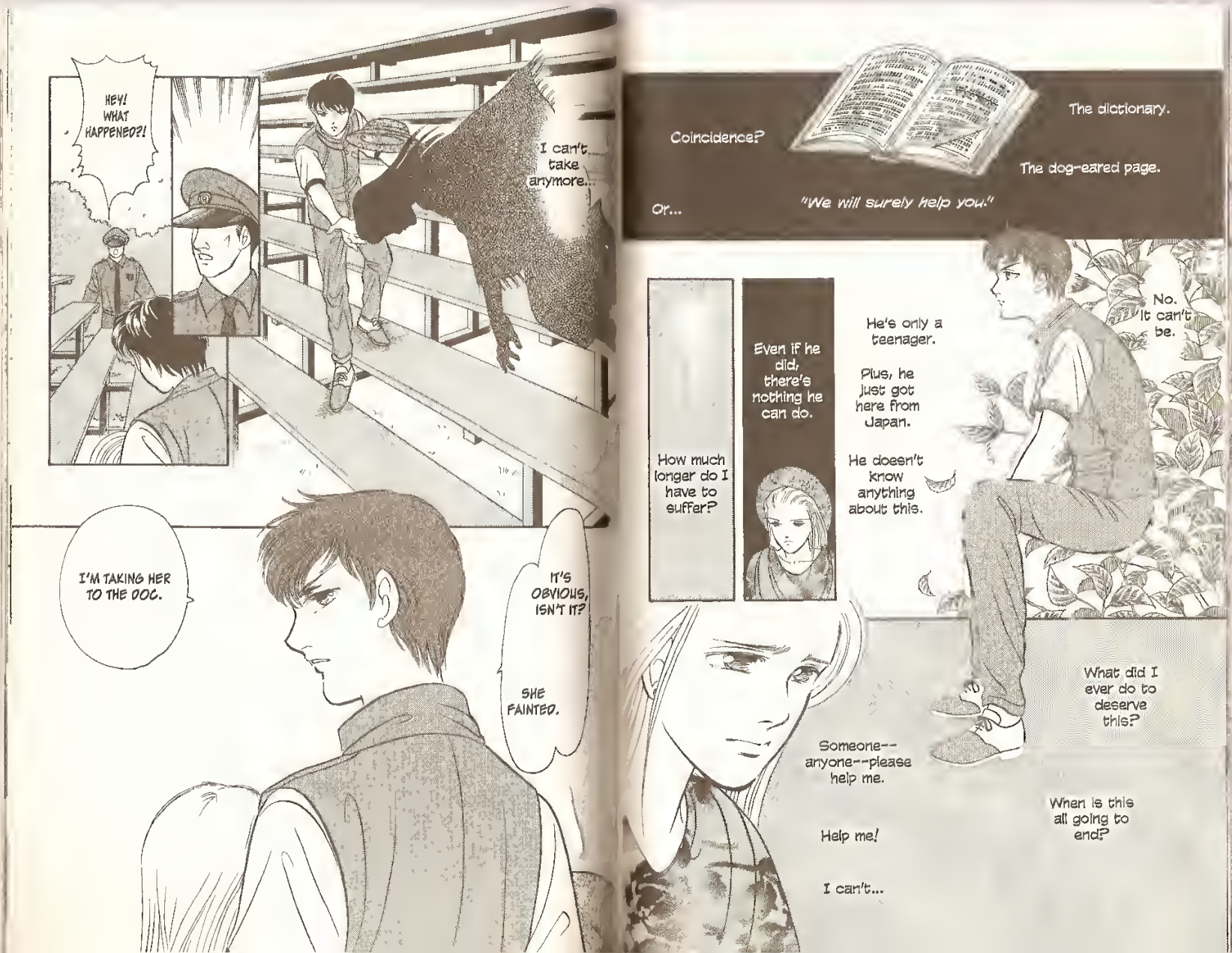

HIS FIRE IS ONE OF HIS ASSETS. HE'S MANAGED TO SAVE OTHER AGENTS ON MORE THAN ONE OCCASION.
I TRAINED WITH HIM. AND BELIEVE ME, HE'S GOOD.
IS HE GOING TO BE ALL RIGHT?
SURE.
WHAT-EVER.
HE'LL BE OKAY. HE MAY NOT LOOK IT, BUT 21'S AN EXCELLENT AGENT.
HE HELPS YOU FEEL HUMAN AGAIN.
IT'S EASY TO FORGET YOU'RE HUMAN ON EXTREME MISSIONS.
I'M JUST WORRIED ABOUT NINE.
AT THIS RATE, HE'S GOING TO BUTT HEADS WITH NINE.
I SERIOUSLY DOUBT THAT. ORDERS FROM THE TOP ARE FINAL.
I KNOW HE'S GOOD.
AND HE MAKES SENSE IN SOME WAYS.


WE'RE NOT TIED DOWN IN ANYWAY.
I ALWAYS USED TO THINK IT WAS JUST A SIMPLE MATTER OF SAVING THE WORLD.
SIGH
ULTIMATE BLUE DOESN'T SERVE ANY ONE COUNTRY.
IT'S NOT LIKE THAT.
SINCE WHEN DID ULTIMATE BLUE DETERIORATE INTO SUCH AN UNCARING ORGANIZA-TION?
SLAM
BUT HUMANS AREN'T MACHINES. THE VERY PEOPLE WE'RE TRYING TO PROTECT FEEL PAIN AND SORROW!
THERE'S NO WAY I'M GOING TO IGNORE ALL THAT AND EXECUTE ORDERS LIKE SOME UNFEELING ROBOT!
WELL, SOOORRY FOR BEING SO EMOTIONAL!


TO BE HONEST, I CAN'T TELL WHAT SORT OF PERSON NINE IS.
WE'RE STILL FEELING EACH OTHER OUT.
HIS HEAD MAY KNOW THAT, BUT HIS HEART MIGHT NOT.
I HOPE NOTHING BAD COMES OF THIS.
Wednesday, 11:15 AM
HI.
JUST WATCHING?
UM... AH... YES.


EXCUSE ME, WHAT TIME IS IT?
UM... LET'S SEE.
ALMOST HALF PAST 11.
NO.
I LIKE IT HERE.
IT'S VERY HOT OUT.
I THINK YOU SHOULD BE TAKING IT EASY INSIDE.
<SIGH>
YOU LOOK REALLY PALE. YOU NEED TO TAKE BETTER CARE OF YOURSELF.
YOU SURE?

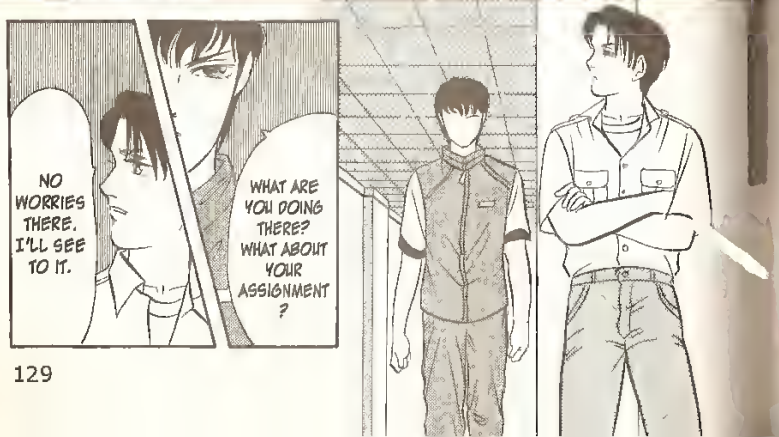

OH. I'M KATHY-- KATHY WEEKES.
THIS IS THE SECOND TIME WE'VE SPOKEN.
KOU SHINO-ZUKA. JUST CALL ME KOU.
IT'S ONLY MY SECOND DAY HERE. SO I'M JUST WATCHING FOR NOW.
I'M NOT FEELING VERY WELL.
HOW COME YOU'RE JUST WATCHING ...UM...UM...
JOLT
OH, THAT'S RIGHT. YOU PICKED UP MY DICTIONARY.
WE CAN HEAR THE ENTIRE CONVERSA-TION THROUGH THAT BUG ON YOU.
ANO OON'T FORGET WE'RE ALWAYS WATCHING YOU.
OON'T TELL HIM ANY-THING.

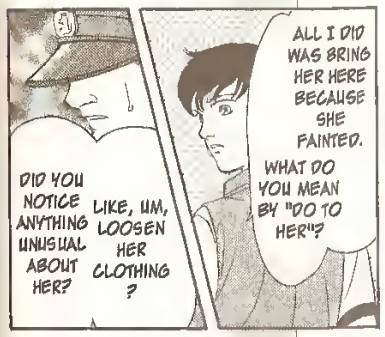

HEY! WHAT HAPPENED?!
I can't take anymore...
I'M TAKING HER TO THE OOC.
IT'S OBVIOUS, ISN'T IT?
SHE FAINTED.
Coincidence?
The dictionary.
The dog-eared page.
Or...
"We will surely help you."
How much longer do I have to suffer?
Even if he did, there's nothing he can do.
He's only a teenager.
Plus, he just got here from Japan.
He doesn't know anything about this.
No. It can't be.
What did I ever do to deserve this?
Someone-- anyone--please help me.
Help me!
I can't...
When is this all going to end?

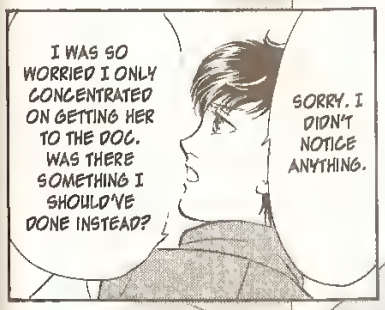

HEY, WAIT! STOP!
THE KID'S FAST!
COME IN, ANYONE INSIDE!
INFIRMARY


RY
HE SAID THE KID WAS UNUSUALLY CALM AND FAST.
CLICK
I'LL STOP THE DOC! YOU, THE KID!
THUD THUD THUD
RIGHT!
WHY'D HE LET THE KID TAKE HER?
I HOPE WE'RE IN TIME.
DASH
HEY, YOU! STOP RIGHT THERE!
REALLY?
WE'LL TAKE CARE OF HER FROM HERE.
WE HAVE DIRECT ORDERS FROM THE PRINCIPAL.
SORRY, DOC.


INFIRMARY
SO SHE FINALLY COLLAPSED.


NO WORRIES THERE. I'LL SEE TO IT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING THERE? WHAT ABOUT YOUR ASSIGNMENT?


DID YOU NOTICE ANYTHING UNUSUAL ABOUT HER?
LIKE, UM, LOOSEN HER CLOTHING?
ALL I DID WAS BRING HER HERE BECAUSE SHE FAINTED.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY "DO TO HER"?


I WAS SO WORRIED I ONLY CONCENTRATED ON GETTING HER TO THE DOC. WAS THERE SOMETHING I SHOULD'VE DONE INSTEAD?
SORRY. I DIDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING.


HUH?
DID YOU DO ANYTHING TO THAT GIRL?!






NO.
YOU DID THE RIGHT THING. THANKS.
BYE.


THAT'S ALL THERE IS TO IT.
I'M ALSO TO PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.
MINE IS TO APPREHEND THE SUSPECTS AND QUICKLY BRING THIS INCIDENT TO A SUCCESSFUL CONCLUSION.
DON'T DO ANYTHING STUPID.
I'M NOT GOING TO STAND FOR THAT!
YOU'D SACRIFICE A GIRL TO RESOLVE THIS.
YOU'D DO IT, WOULDN'T YOU?!
ISN'T IT PART OF OUR MISSION TO ALLEVIATE HER SUFFERING?!
THEN MY MISSION IS DIFFERENT FROM YOURS.
NOTHING SERIOUS?!
YOU CAN'T UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE'S GOING THROUGH, CAN YOU?!
SHE ONLY FAINTED BECAUSE OF STRESS. IT'S NOTHING SERIOUS.
HAVE YOU STOPPED TO THINK ABOUT WHAT'S GOING THROUGH HER HEAD? SHE HAS A BOMB STRAPPED TO HER!
IT COULD GO OFF AT ANYTIME! EVEN ADULTS CAN'T HANDLE THAT SORT OF PRESSURE!



Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 5

Nine was something else.

She was already steps ahead.

NINE!

We just didn't know it yet.

End of Mission 25
Blue Beginnings, Part 4

WEDNESDAY, 12:01 PM



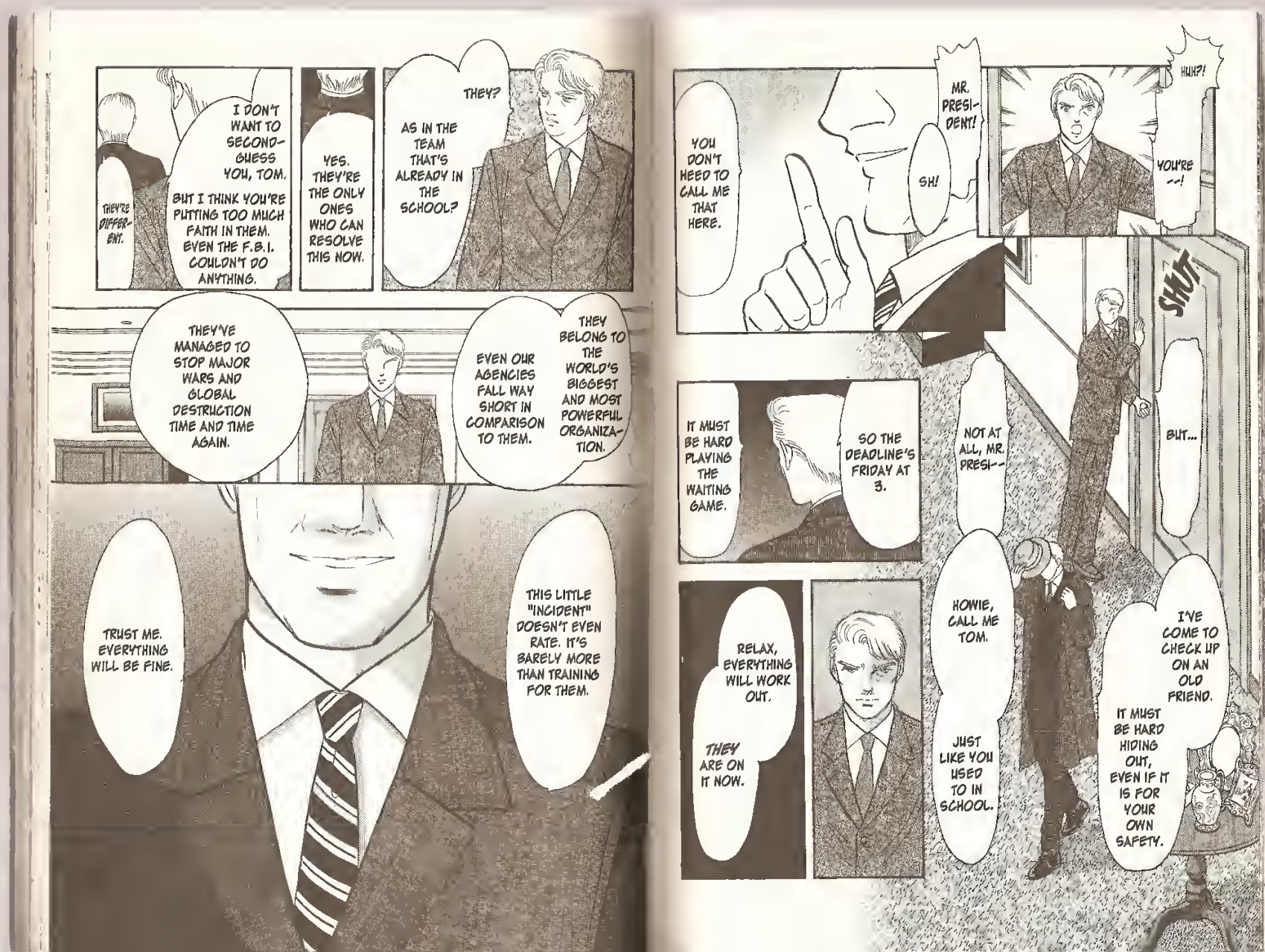
Ultimate Blue agents call each other by their code numbers.

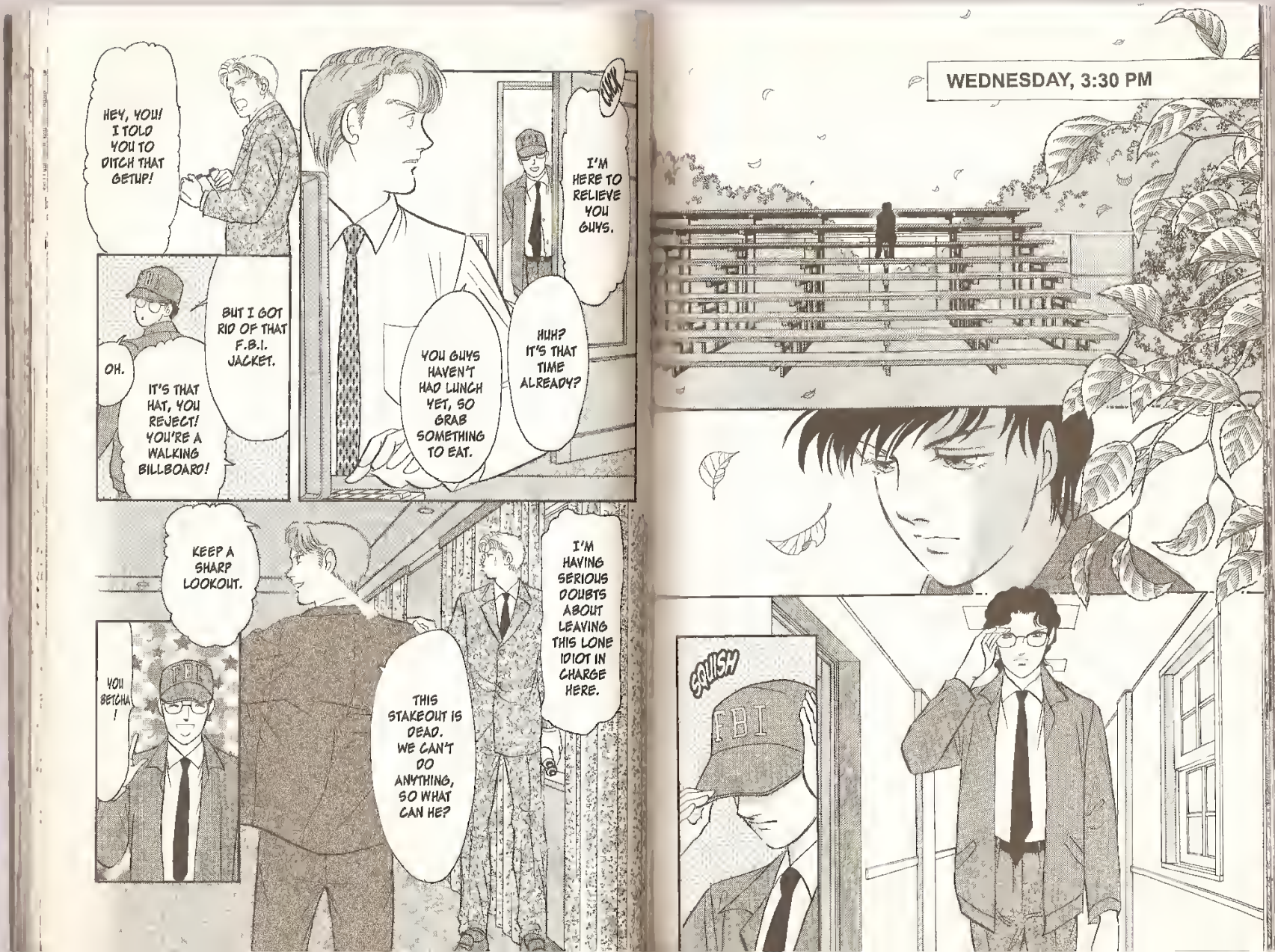
They have codenames, but the code numbers have greater significance. Lower the number, higher the position within Ultimate Blue.

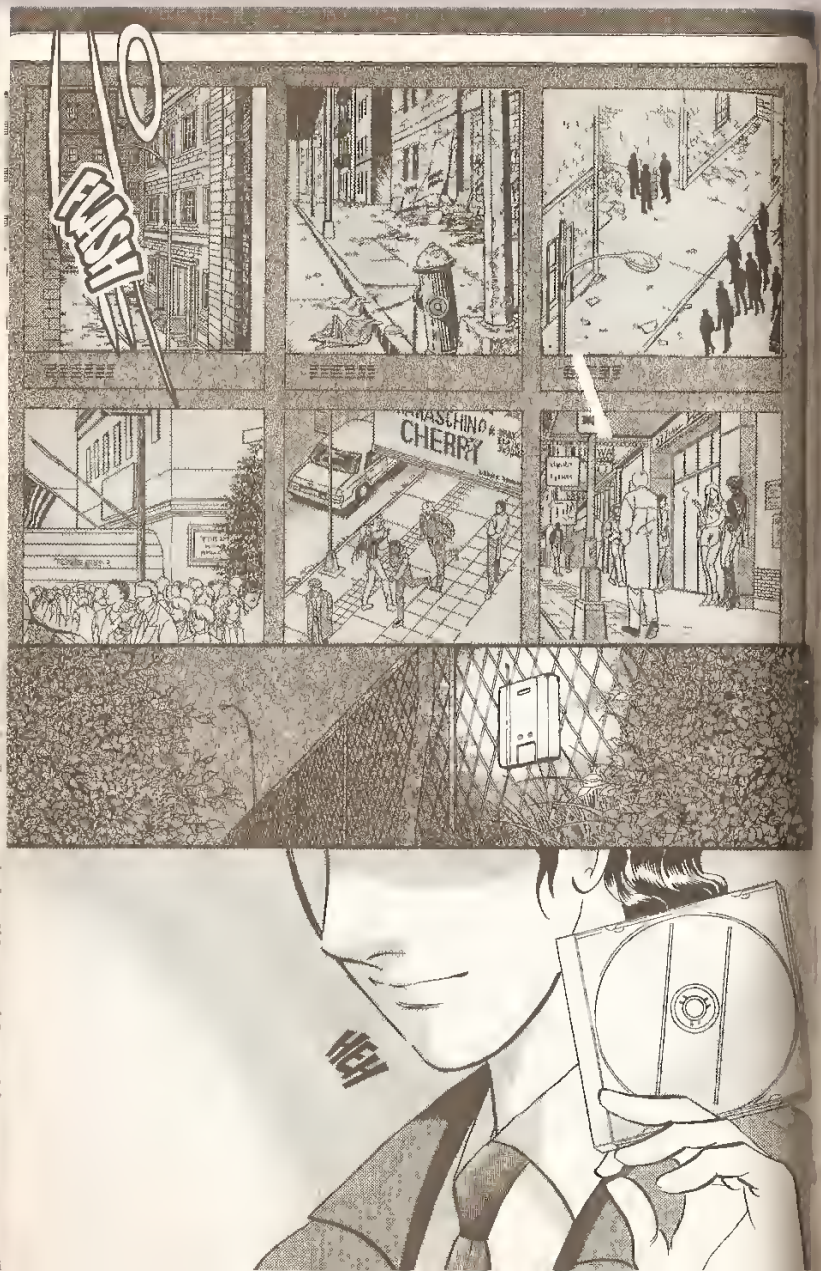
The agents known by only single digits are a breed apart.

It is said there is nothing the "ones" can't resolve.

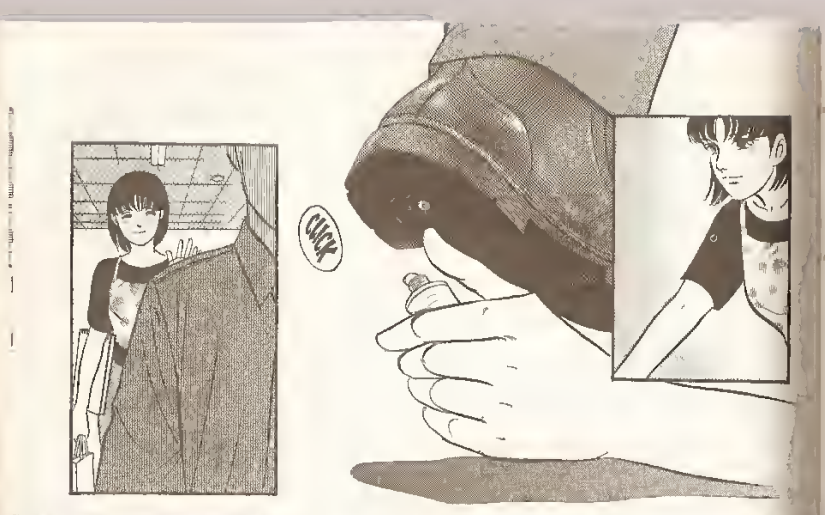
In fact, some of their accomplishments are nothing short of divine.


THEY'RE DIFFERENT.
I DON'T WANT TO SECOND-GUESS YOU, TOM.
BUT I THINK YOU'RE PUTTING TOO MUCH FAITH IN THEM. EVEN THE F.B.I. COULDN'T DO ANYTHING.
YES. THEY'RE THE ONLY ONES WHO CAN RESOLVE THIS NOW.
THEY?
AS IN THE TEAM THAT'S ALREADY IN THE SCHOOL?
THEY'VE MANAGED TO STOP MAJOR WARS AND GLOBAL DESTRUCTION TIME AND TIME AGAIN.
EVEN OUR AGENCIES FALL WAY SHORT IN COMPARISON TO THEM.
THEY BELONG TO THE WORLD'S BIGGEST AND MOST POWERFUL ORGANIZATION.
TRUST ME. EVERYTHING WILL BE FINE.
THIS LITTLE "INCIDENT" DOESN'T EVEN RATE. IT'S BARELY MORE THAN TRAINING FOR THEM.
YOU DON'T NEED TO CALL ME THAT HERE.
SH!
MR. PRESI-DENT!
HUH?!
YOU'RE --!
SHUT
IT MUST BE HARD PLAYING THE WAITING GAME.
SO THE DEADLINE'S FRIDAY AT 3.
NOT AT ALL, MR. PRESI--
BUT...
RELAX, EVERYTHING WILL WORK OUT.
THEY ARE ON IT NOW.
HOWIE, CALL ME TOM.
JUST LIKE YOU USED TO IN SCHOOL.
I'VE COME TO CHECK UP ON AN OLD FRIEND.
IT MUST BE HARD HIDING OUT, EVEN IF IT IS FOR YOUR OWN SAFETY.


HEY, YOU! I TOLD YOU TO DITCH THAT GETUP!
BUT I GOT RID OF THAT F.B.I. JACKET.
OH.
IT'S THAT HAT, YOU REJECT! YOU'RE A WALKING BILLBOARD!
CLICK
I'M HERE TO RELIEVE YOU GUYS.
HUH? IT'S THAT TIME ALREADY?
YOU GUYS HAVEN'T HAD LUNCH YET, SO GRAB SOMETHING TO EAT.
KEEP A SHARP LOOKOUT.
YOU BETCHA!
THIS STAKEOUT IS DEAD. WE CAN'T DO ANYTHING, SO WHAT CAN HE?
I'M HAVING SERIOUS DOUBTS ABOUT LEAVING THIS LONE IDIOT IN CHARGE HERE.
WEDNESDAY, 3:30 PM
SQUISH
FBI

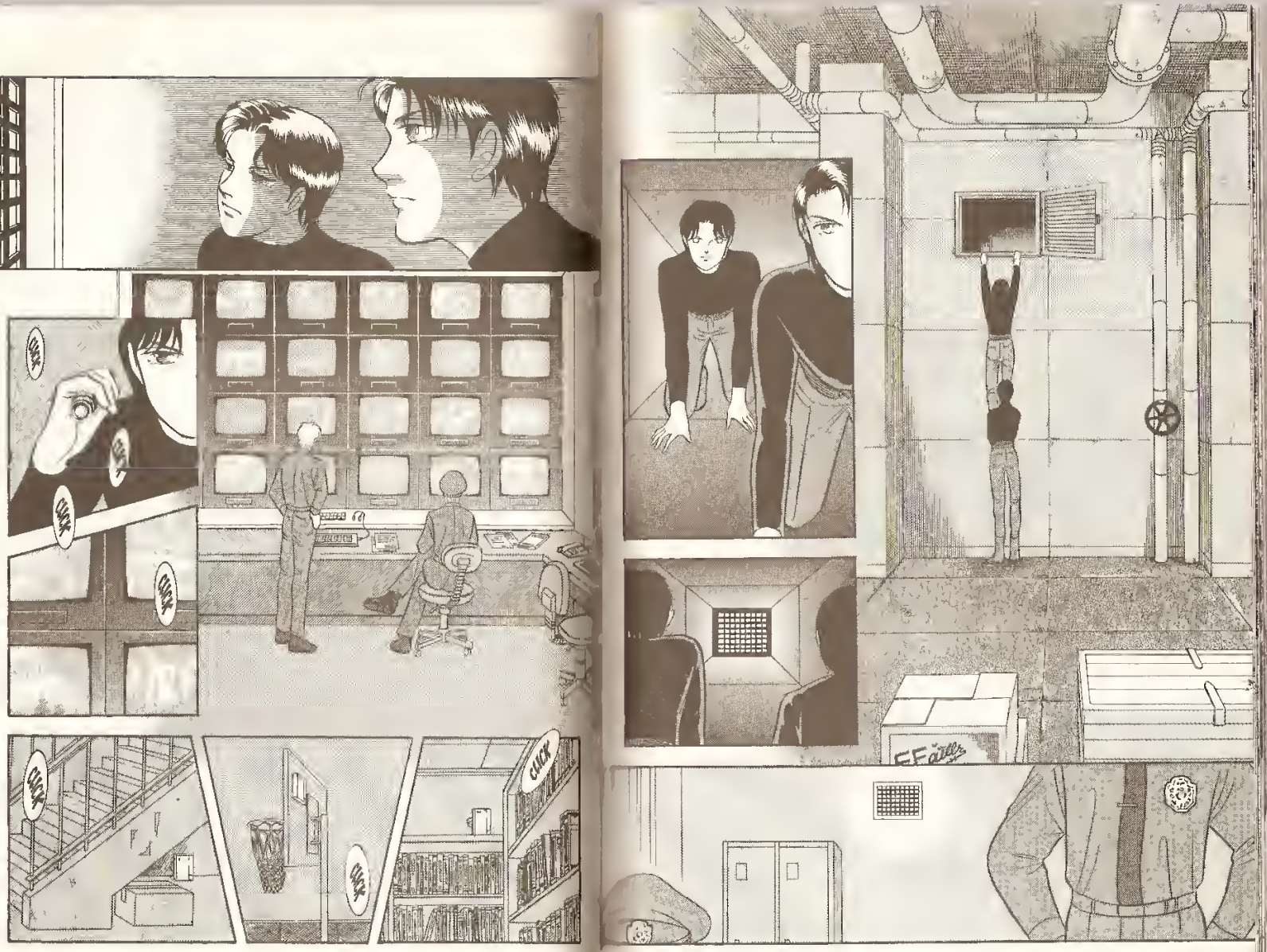

FLASH
MASCHINO
CHERRY
HEH

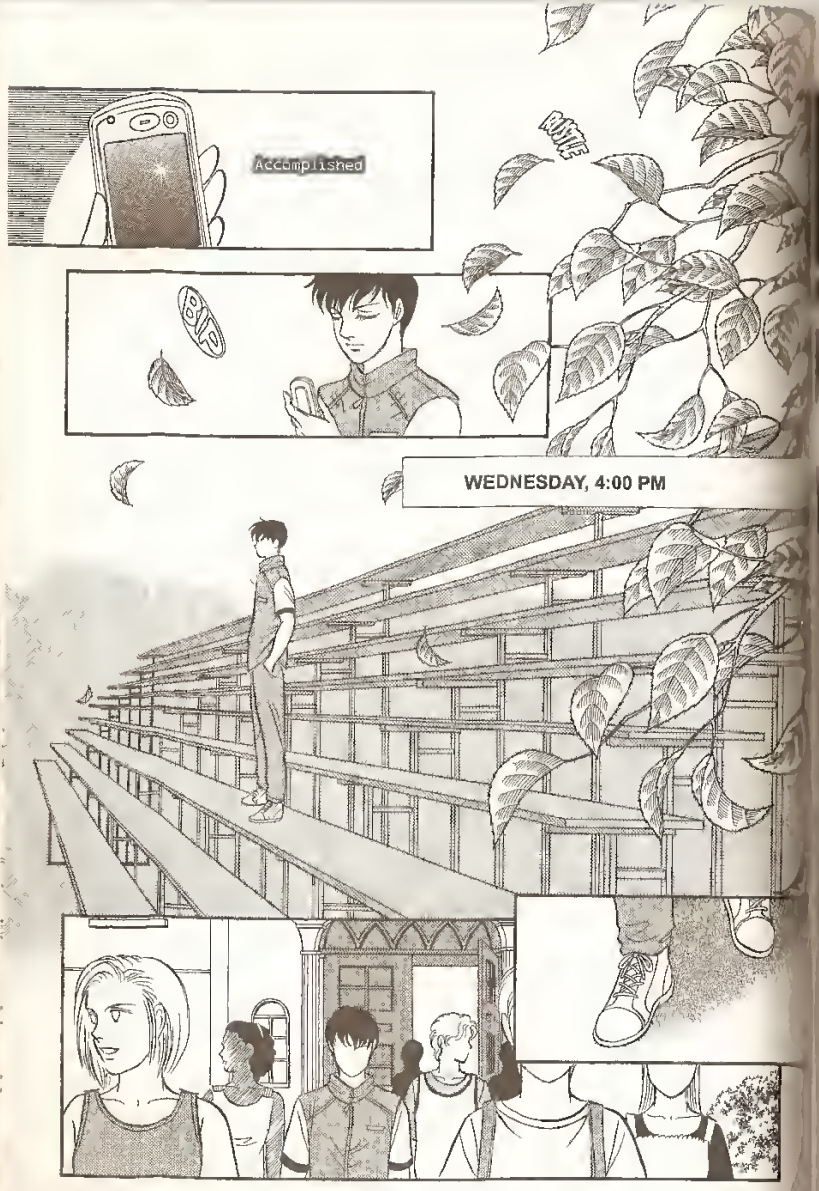

FBI
SHIT
CLACK
CLAKT CLAKT CLAKT CLAKT
CLAKT CLAKT CLAKT CLAKT
CLAKT CLAKT CLAKT CLAKT


CLICK

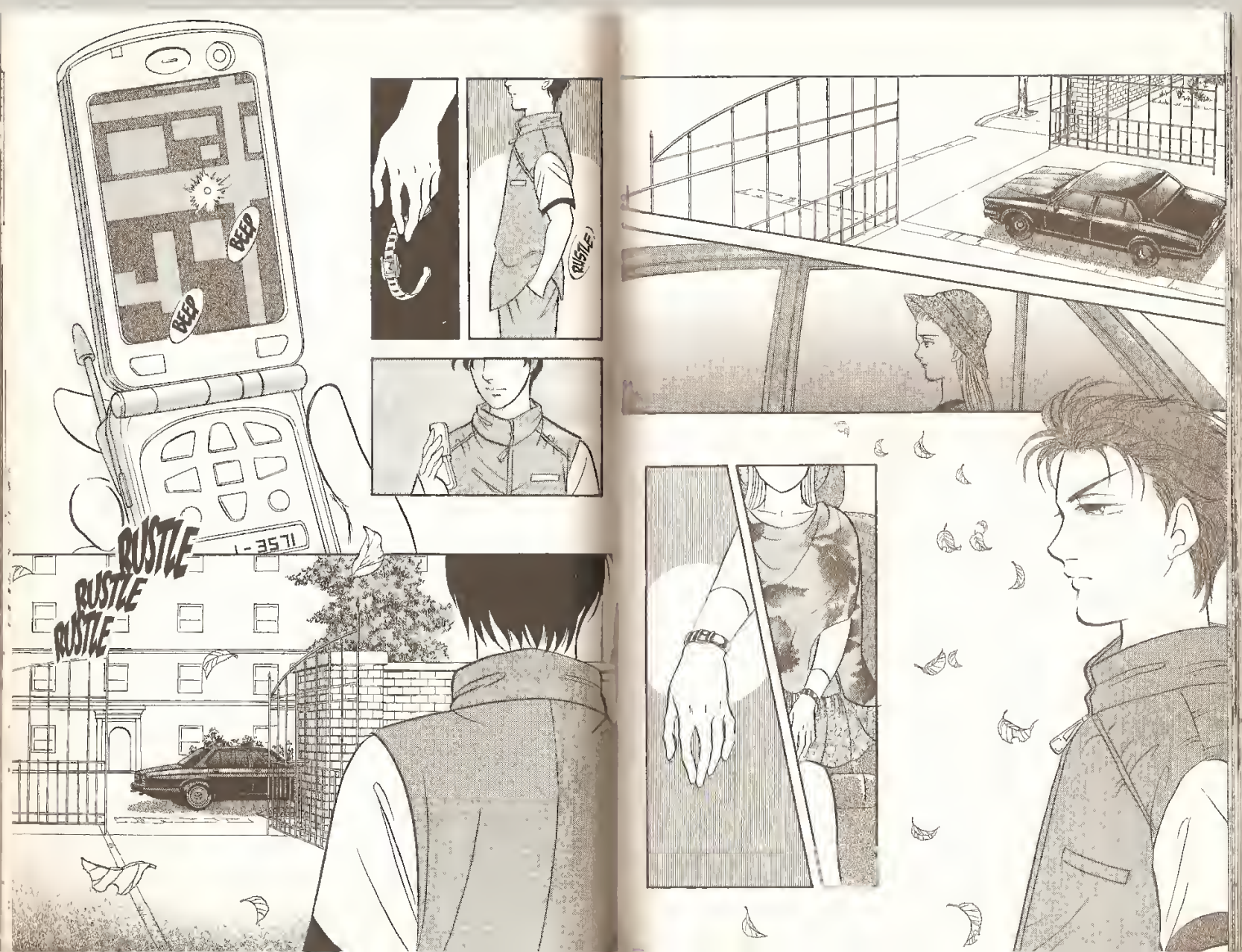




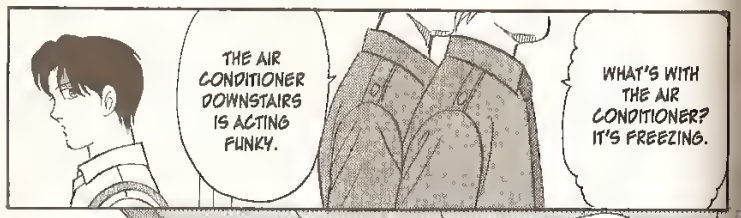

CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK
CLICK


Accomplished
BUZZ
BIP
WEDNESDAY, 4:00 PM


FU
BISH


BEEP
BEEP
1-3571
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
(RUSTLE)



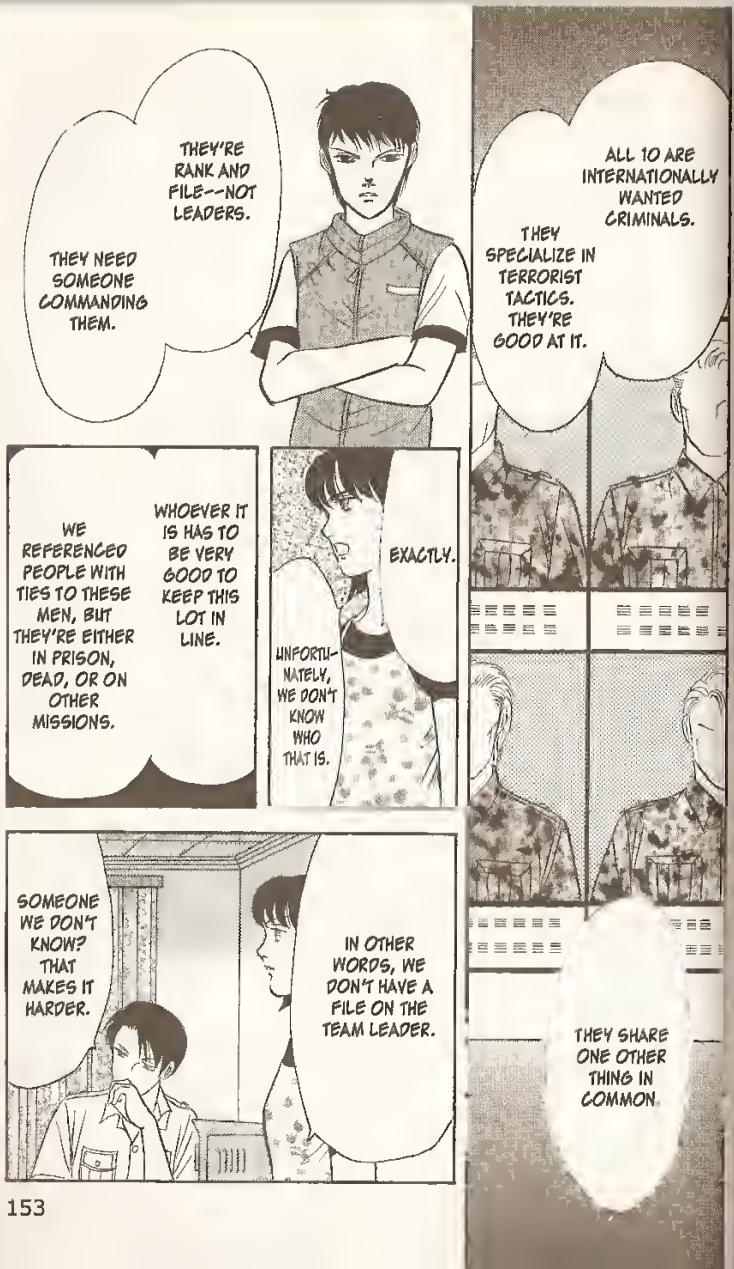

THE AIR CONDITIONER DOWNSTAIRS IS ACTING FUNKY.
WHAT'S WITH THE AIR CONDITIONER? IT'S FREEZING.


♫
LET'S GO.


HUH?

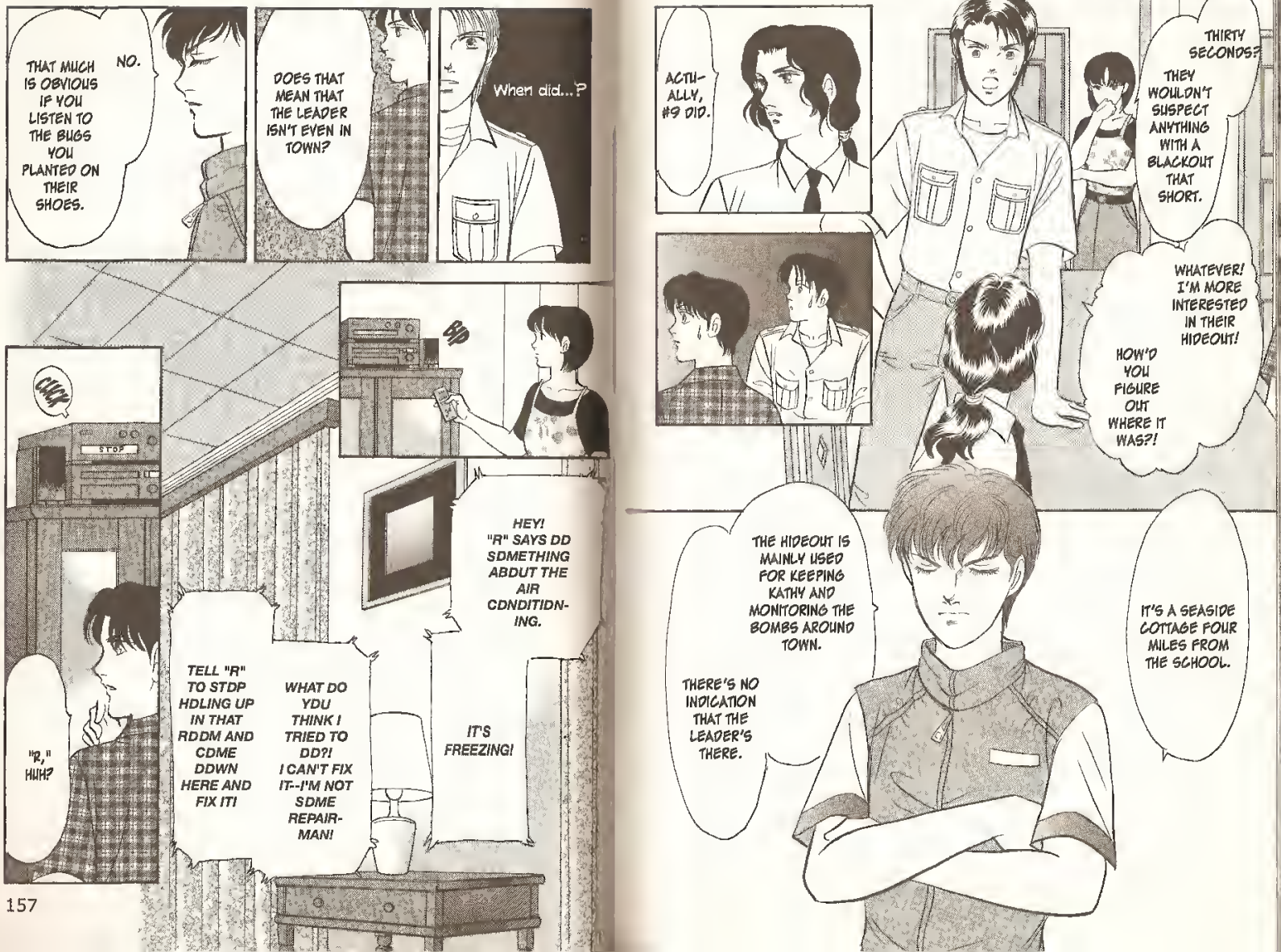

DOWN-STAIRS?
I DIDN'T NOTICE ANYTHING WHEN WE WENT THROUGH THE AIR DUCTS. DID YOU?
NOPE.
MAYBE IT'S JUST OLD.




THEY'RE RANK AND FILE--NOT LEADERS.
THEY NEED SOMEONE COMMANDING THEM.
WHOEVER IT IS HAS TO BE VERY GOOD TO KEEP THIS LOT IN LINE.
WE REFERENCED PEOPLE WITH TIES TO THESE MEN, BUT THEY'RE EITHER IN PRISON, DEAD, OR ON OTHER MISSIONS.
EXACTLY.
UNFORTUNATELY, WE DON'T KNOW WHO THAT IS.
ALL 10 ARE INTERNATIONALLY WANTED CRIMINALS.
THEY SPECIALIZE IN TERRORIST TACTICS. THEY'RE GOOD AT IT.
THEY SHARE ONE OTHER THING IN COMMON.
SOMEONE WE DON'T KNOW? THAT MAKES IT HARDER.
IN OTHER WORDS, WE DON'T HAVE A FILE ON THE TEAM LEADER.

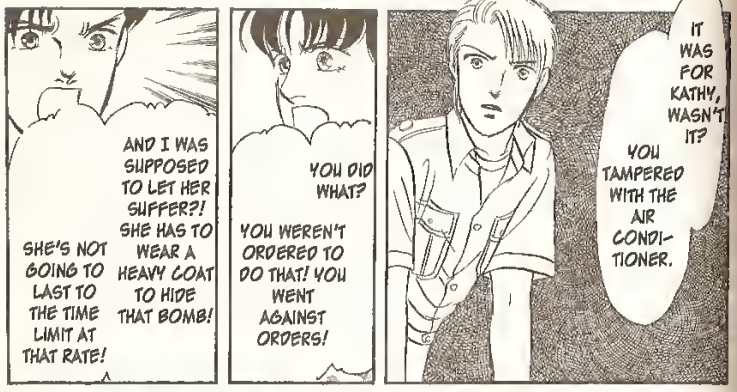

TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
ALL ARE DANGEROUS. THEY'RE EXTREMISTS LOYAL TO GENERAL CANAN.
THERE ARE 10 KIDNAPPERS AT THE SCHOOL MASQUERADING AS SECURITY.
FLASH

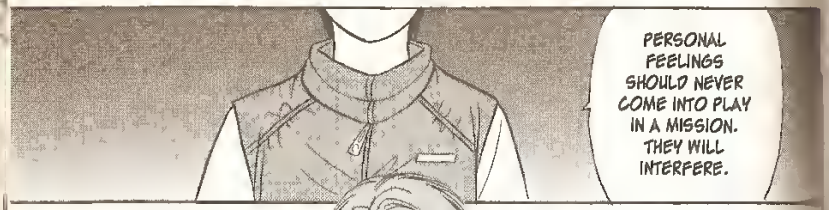

THEY'VE BEEN REPLACED WITH FAKES.
DON'T WORRY ABOUT THE ONES IN THE CITY.
OH, THE BOMBS.
WHAT?!
AFTER THAT, THERE WAS A TEMPORARY "BLACKOUT" WHERE THEIR HIDEOUT WAS. THE BOMBS WERE DISPOSED OF AS SOON AS THE MONITORS FAILED.
IT TOOK ALL OF 30 SECONDS.
THE KIDNAPPERS ARE WATCHING THEIR BOMBS. NEEDLESS TO SAY, THE F.B.I. HACKED THEIR SIGNALS AND CAN SEE THE SAME THING.
WE "BORROWED" THEIR DATA AND LOCATED THE BOMBS.
WHAT'S SO SURPRISING ABOUT THAT? IT'S ONE OF THE FIRST THINGS YOU LEARN AT ULTIMATE BLUE.
EASIER SAID THAN DONE. WE'RE PRESSED FOR TIME HERE.
WE HAVE TO. IT'S OUR MISSION TO TAKE DOWN THE LEADER.
THAT SOMEONE PROBABLY HAS THE DETONATOR.
WE DON'T KNOW WHERE HE IS LET ALONE WHO HE IS. WE CAN'T PLAN COUNTER-MEASURES.
THIS SORT OF THING IS PRETTY ROUTINE FOR ULTIMATE BLUE.
BUT THE DEADLINE'S FRIDAY AT 3 AND IT'S ALREADY MIDNIGHT ON THURSDAY.
UNLESS WE GET RID OF THOSE FIRST, WE CAN'T GO AFTER THE LEADER -- WE DON'T KNOW WHAT HE LOOKS LIKE.
THE ONES AROUND THE CITY ARE FORCING THE AUTHORITIES TO KEEP UP THE PRETENSE OF NORMALCY AT THE SCHOOL WHILE PREVENTING THEM FROM DOING ANYTHING ELSE.
THERE ARE BOMBS EVERYWHERE. THE ONE AROUND KATHY'S WAIST. THE ONES PLANTED AROUND THE SCHOOL.
STOP
STOP

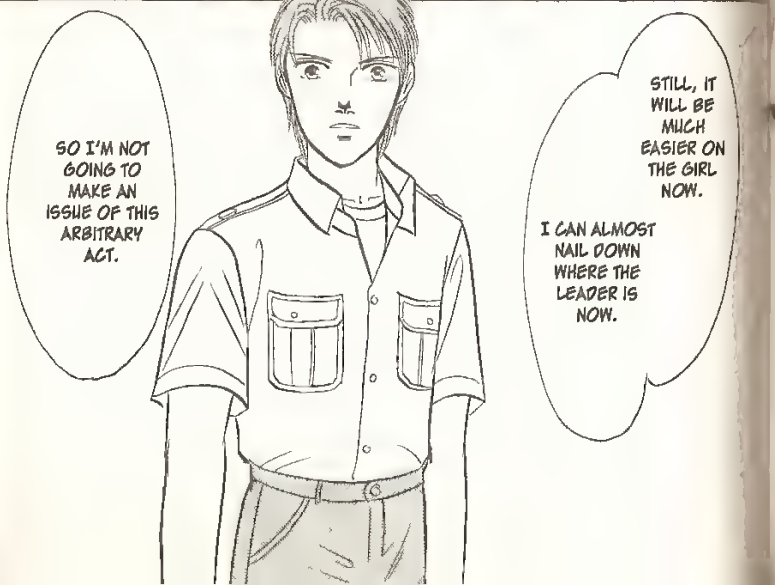

THAT MUCH IS OBVIOUS IF YOU LISTEN TO THE BUGS YOU PLANTED ON THEIR SHOES.
NO.
DOES THAT MEAN THAT THE LEADER ISN'T EVEN IN TOWN?
When did...?
BIP
CLICK
STOP
"R," HUH?
TELL "R" TO STDP HDLING UP IN THAT RDDM AND CDME DDWN HERE AND FIX IT!
WHAT DO YDU THINK I TRIED TO DD?! I CAN'T FIX IT--I'M NOT SDME REPAIR-MAN!
IT'S FREEZING!
HEY! "R" SAYS DD SDMETHING ABDUT THE AIR CDNDITIDN-ING.
ACTU-ALLY, #9 DID.
THIRTY SECONDS? THEY WOULDN'T SUSPECT ANYTHING WITH A BLACKOUT THAT SHORT.
WHATEVER! I'M MORE INTERESTED IN THEIR HIDEOUT!
HOW'D YOU FIGURE OUT WHERE IT WAS?!
IT'S A SEASIDE COTTAGE FOUR MILES FROM THE SCHOOL.
THE HIDEOUT IS MAINLY USED FOR KEEPING KATHY AND MONITORING THE BOMBS AROUND TOWN.
THERE'S NO INDICATION THAT THE LEADER'S THERE.

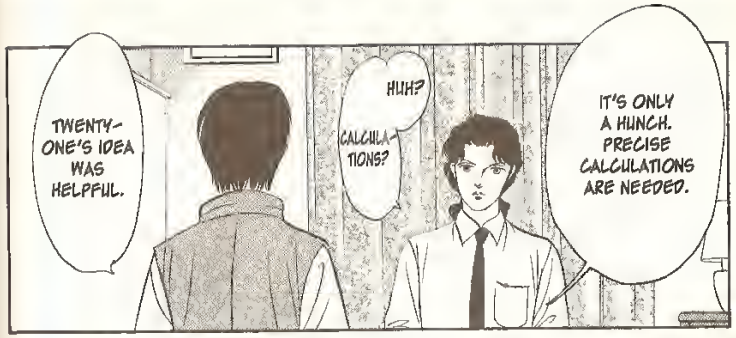

HMM ...
HE'S STILL AT THE SCHOOL, REMEMBER?
HIS MISSION IS TO SECURE THE GENERAL'S RELEASE. HE'S NOT GOING TO KILL HIMSELF JUST TO KILL KATHY.
I NOW HAVE AN IDEA WHERE THEIR LEADER IS HIDING OUT.
WHAT IS IT, NINE?
YOU DO?!

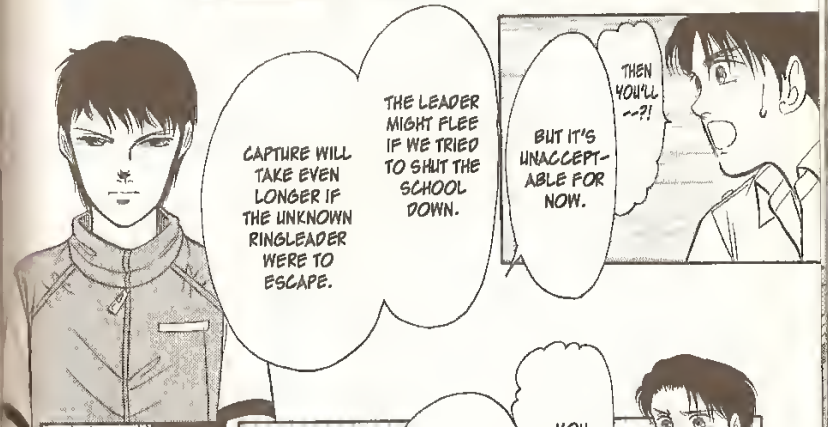

SHUT THE SCHOOL DOWN!
YEAH, AND HAS THE DETONATOR TOO.
FROM THE SOUNDS OF IT, THE TEAM LEADER IS HIDING SOMEWHERE IN THE SCHOOL.
IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO SEARCH A SCHOOL THAT BIG. AND IT COULD BE FOR NOTHING IF THE TARGET MOVES.
AND IF THE LEADER PUSHES THE DETONATOR BEFORE THAT?
WHILE THEY'RE PANICKING, WE TAKE THE BOMB OFF KATHY.
THE KIDNAPPERS CAN'T FORCE THE STUDENTS INTO COMING BECAUSE THE BOMBS AROUND THE CITY HAVE BEEN DISARMED.


SHE'S NOT GOING TO LAST TO THE TIME LIMIT AT THAT RATE!
AND I WAS SUPPOSED TO LET HER SUFFER?! SHE HAS TO WEAR A HEAVY COAT TO HIDE THAT BOMB!
YOU DID WHAT?
YOU WEREN'T ORDERED TO DO THAT! YOU WENT AGAINST ORDERS!
IT WAS FOR KATHY, WASN'T IT?
YOU TAMPERED WITH THE AIR CONDI-TIONER.


PERSONAL FEELINGS SHOULD NEVER COME INTO PLAY IN A MISSION. THEY WILL INTERFERE.

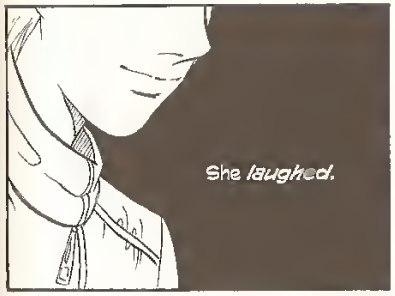

SO I'M NOT GOING TO MAKE AN ISSUE OF THIS ARBITRARY ACT.
STILL, IT WILL BE MUCH EASIER ON THE GIRL NOW.
I CAN ALMOST NAIL DOWN WHERE THE LEADER IS NOW.


TWENTY-ONE'S IDEA WAS HELPFUL.
HUH?
CALCULA-TIONS?
IT'S ONLY A HUNCH. PRECISE CALCULATIONS ARE NEEDED.


CAPTURE WILL TAKE EVEN LONGER IF THE UNKNOWN RINGLEADER WERE TO ESCAPE.
THE LEADER MIGHT FLEE IF WE TRIED TO SHUT THE SCHOOL DOWN.
BUT IT'S UNACCEPT-ABLE FOR NOW.
THEN YOU'LL --?!


YOU'RE RUSHING THINGS.
AND I ONLY HAVE AN IDEA ABOUT THE SPOT. I HAVEN'T NARROWED IT DOWN TO WHO IT IS.
I ONLY SAID AN IDEA. ULTIMATE BLUE DOES NOT ACT UNLESS IT IS 100% CERTAIN.
YOU JUST SAID YOU KNEW.





I... in fact, none of us had seen her do that.

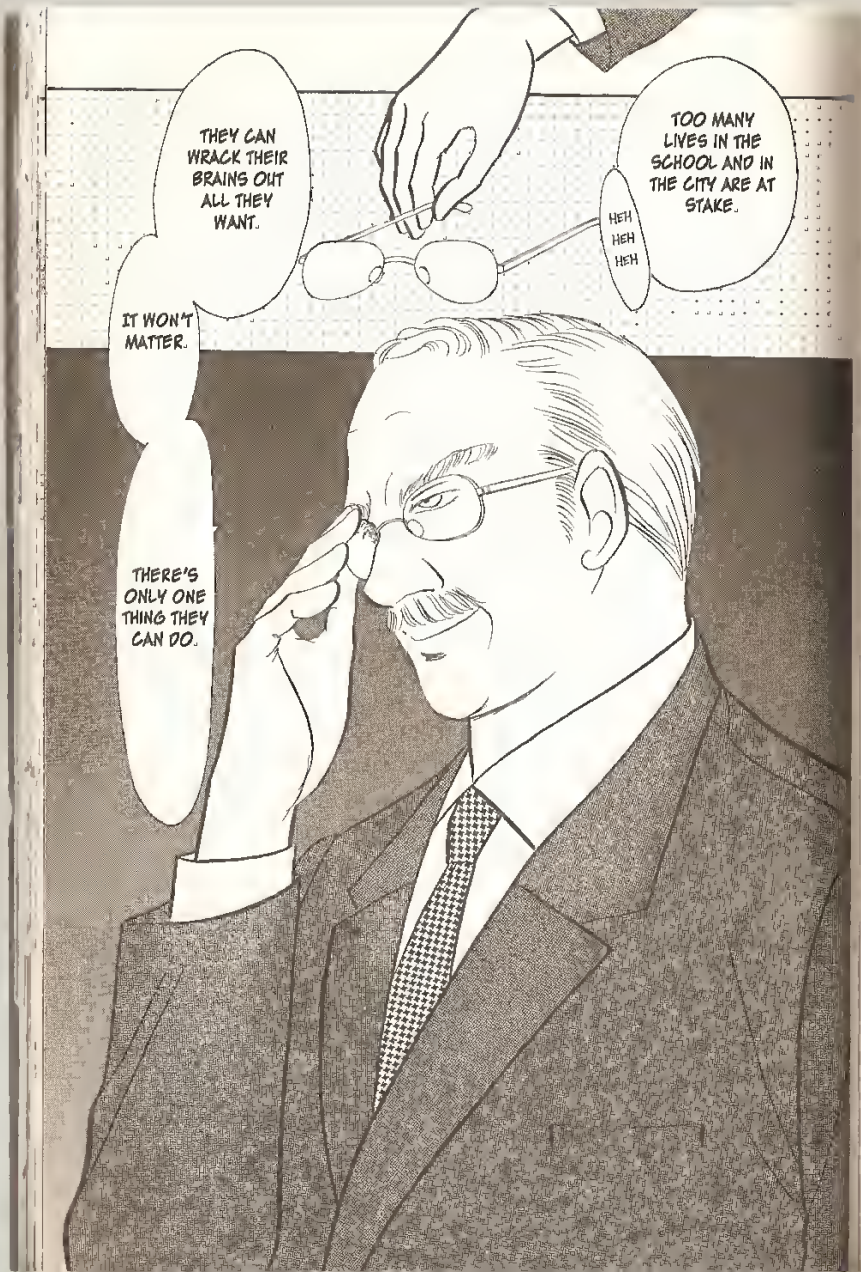


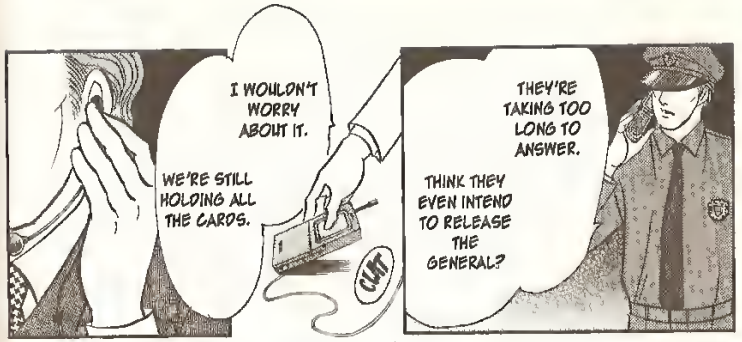
We were taken in by it.

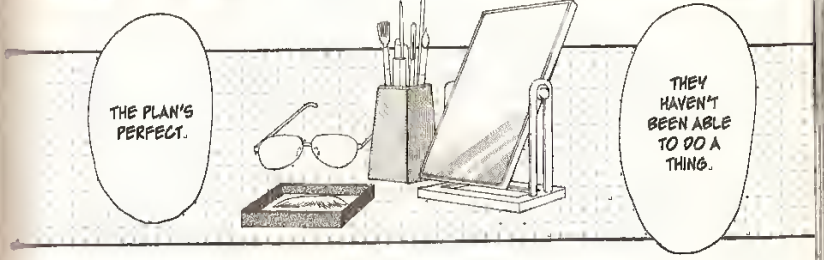
It wasn't the sort of look you'd expect on someone that dangerous--as she'd soon drive home.

It was the innocent smile of a 13-year-old.

End of Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 5


THEY CAN WRACK THEIR BRAINS OUT ALL THEY WANT.
TOO MANY LIVES IN THE SCHOOL AND IN THE CITY ARE AT STAKE.
HEH HEH HEH
IT WON'T MATTER.
THERE'S ONLY ONE THING THEY CAN DO.

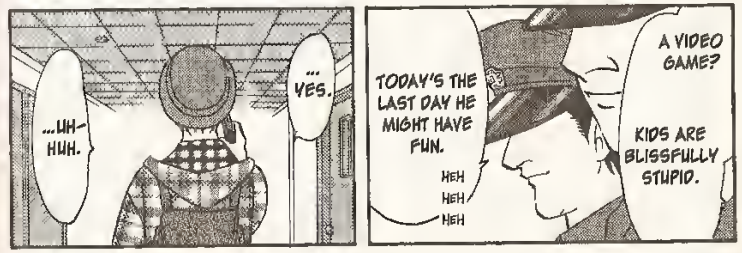

I WOULDN'T WORRY ABOUT IT.
WE'RE STILL HOLDING ALL THE CARDS.
CUT
THEY'RE TAKING TOO LONG TO ANSWER.
THINK THEY EVEN INTEND TO RELEASE THE GENERAL?


THE PLAN'S PERFECT.
THEY HAVEN'T BEEN ABLE TO DO A THING.


COME TO THIS ROOM WHEN THE TIME COMES-- JUST LIKE WE PLANNED.
YDU'D BETTER GUARANTEE US WE'LL BE SAFE.
WHAT IF THEY DDN'T ACCEPT DUR DEMANDS?
BUT YOU WON'T NEED TO. THEY'LL ACCEPT OUR DEMANDS.
THEN I JUST PUSH THIS BUTTON.


SO...
IT'LL TAKE UP TO THE DEADLINE.
BUT WE WANT TO CATCH THE LEADER AND PREVENT THIS FROM HAPPENING AGAIN.
LEAVE EVERYTHING TO US.
THERE IS NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT.


...YES.
...UH-HUH.
...IT'S FINE. I HAVE IT DONE PAT.
I DID A FEW CALCULATIONS TO WORK OUT A PERFECT STRATEGY.
THE LAST BOSS WILL BE THERE FOR SURE.
...IS IT HARD?
NO, NOT REALLY. IT'S HARDLY EVEN A TEST FOR US.
THERE'S NOTHING TO WORRY ABOUT AT ALL.


...YES.
...UH-HUH.
A VIDEO GAME?
KIDS ARE BLISSFULLY STUPID.
TODAY'S THE LAST DAY HE MIGHT HAVE FUN.
HEH HEH HEH

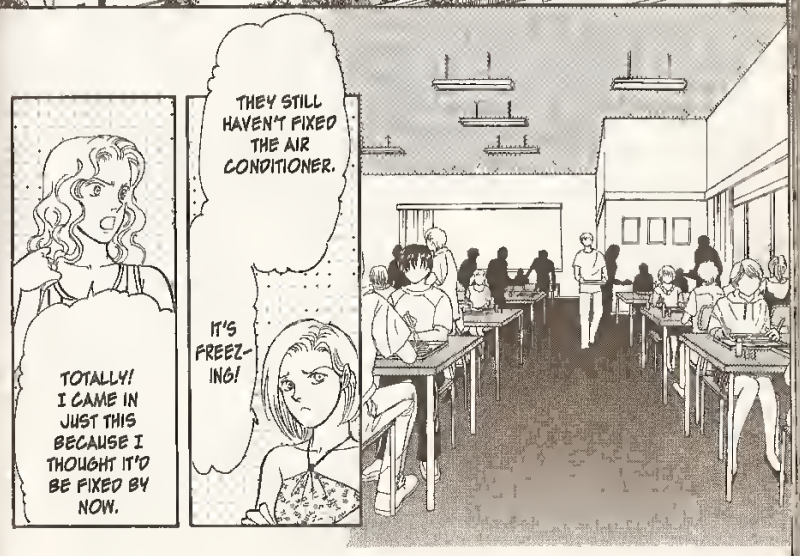


9番目の4年目

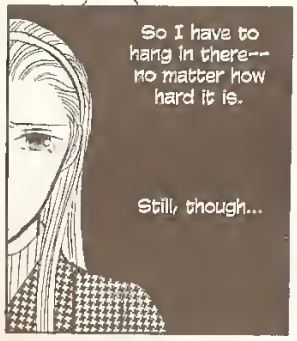
Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 6

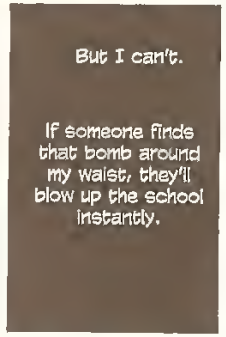

MAYBE IT WAS A GOOD THING I CAUGHT A COLD.
YOU'RE RIGHT. IT'S NOT SO BAD.
AT LEAST, YOU'LL BE NICE AND WARM IN THIS ICEBOX.
I SHOULD'VE WORN A COAT LIKE YOU, KATHY.
CLANG
THAT'S IT! JEFF WORE HIS JACKET TODAY. I'LL BORROW HIS!
GIRL, WHAT A CHEAP EXCUSE TO SKIP OUT AND SEE YOUR BEAU!
I'LL BORROW ONE FOR YOU FROM HIS FRIENDS.
REALLY?! THEN I'M GOING WITH YOU! PREFERABLY JOHNNY'S...
HEE HEE
SEE YOU.


STOP
STOP

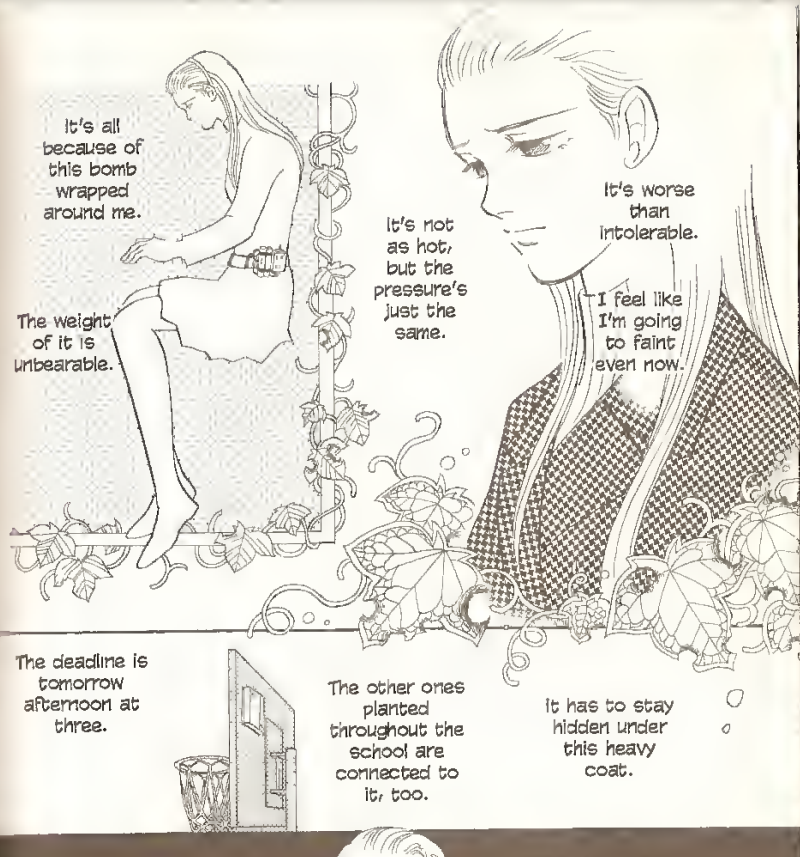

TOTALLY! I CAME IN JUST THIS BECAUSE I THOUGHT IT'D BE FIXED BY NOW.
THEY STILL HAVEN'T FIXED THE AIR CONDITIONER.
IT'S FREEZING!


Daddy? I'm going to hang tough, so I want you to hang tough, too.
Cruel people like them should never be bargained with.
I don't want daddy to give in to them.
I'm... scared.
Am I actually brave enough to say that to daddy?
I mean it, too.


So I have to hang in there-- no matter how hard it is.
Still, though...

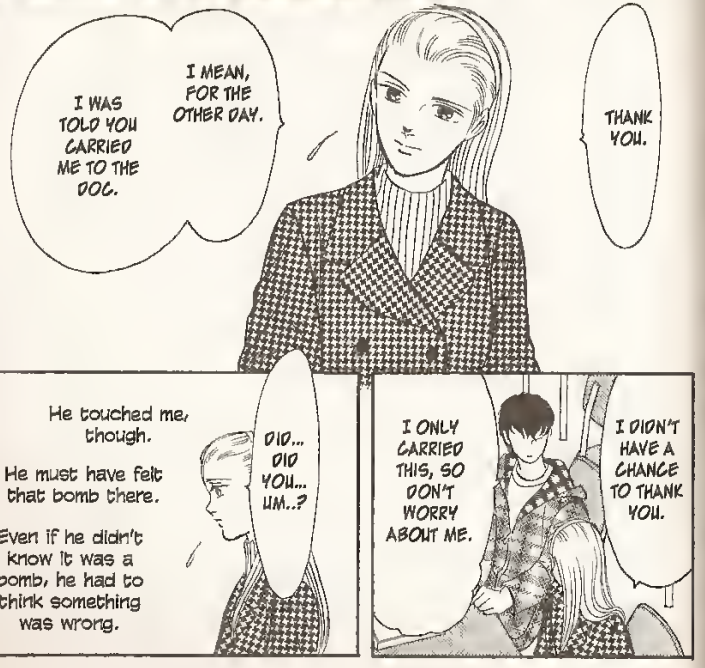

But I can't.
If someone finds that bomb around my waist, they'll blow up the school instantly.


I'm really, really scared.
I'm so scared I think I'm going to faint again.

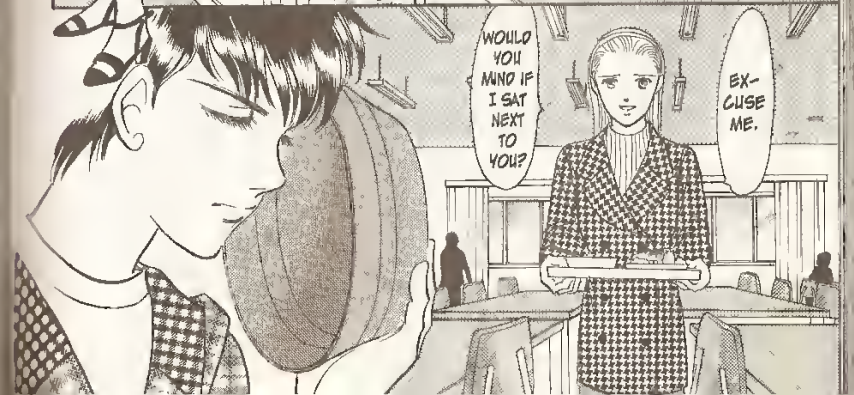

It's all because of this bomb wrapped around me.
The weight of it is unbearable.
It's not as hot, but the pressure's just the same.
It's worse than intolerable.
I feel like I'm going to faint even now.
The deadline is tomorrow afternoon at three.
The other ones planted throughout the school are connected to it, too.
It has to stay hidden under this heavy coat.

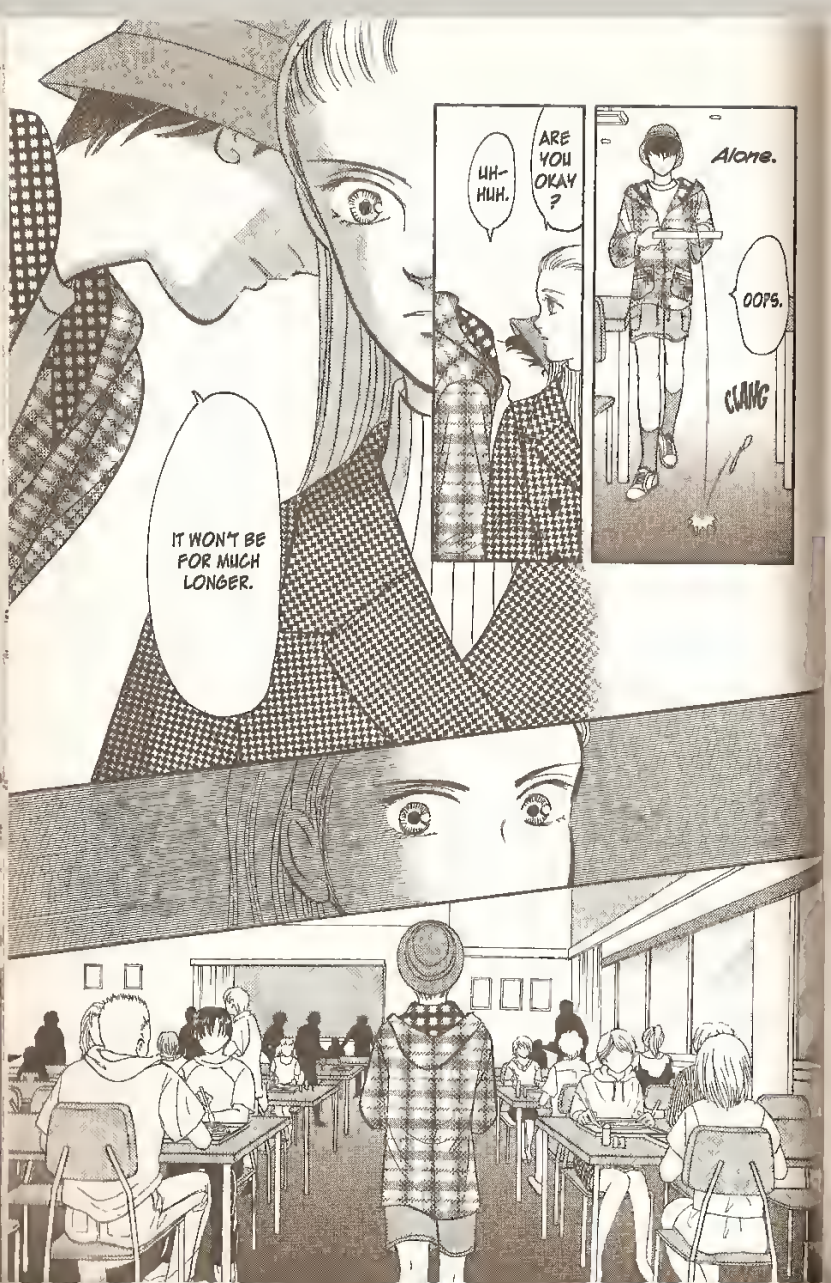

They said they'll kill me and everyone else in the school if someone named Canan isn't released.
My kidnappers said that it was all daddy's fault.
It's because he captured their boss.

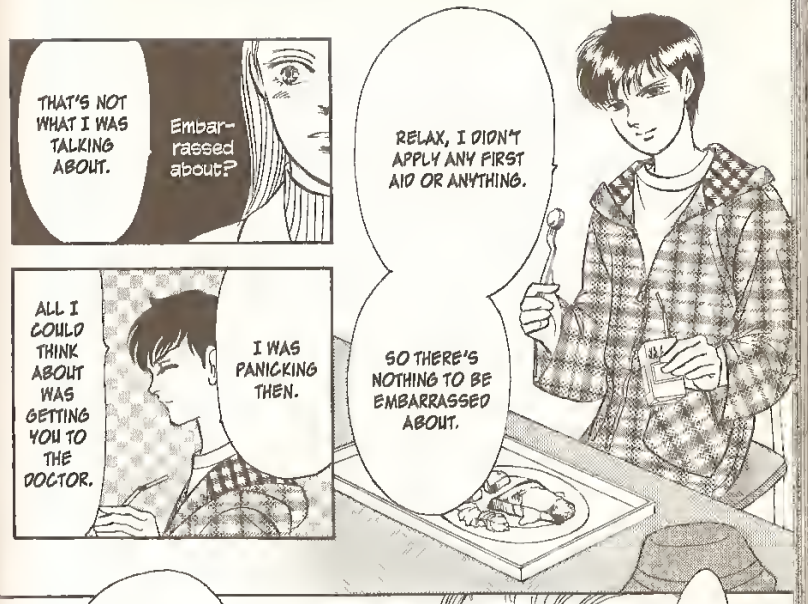

YEAH, BUT IT'S OKAY. HE DOESN'T KNOW A THING.
THAT'S THE KID FROM BEFORE.
NOT AT ALL.
OH, HI!


I WAS TOLD YOU CARRIED ME TO THE DOC.
I MEAN, FOR THE OTHER DAY.
THANK YOU.
He touched me, though.
He must have felt that bomb there.
Even if he didn't know it was a bomb, he had to think something was wrong.
DID... DID YOU... UM..?
I ONLY CARRIED THIS, SO DON'T WORRY ABOUT ME.
I DIDN'T HAVE A CHANCE TO THANK YOU.

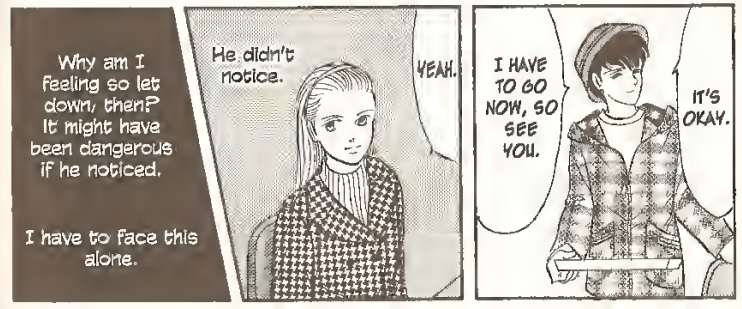

It's him!
I do my best.
Then what?
HMM ...

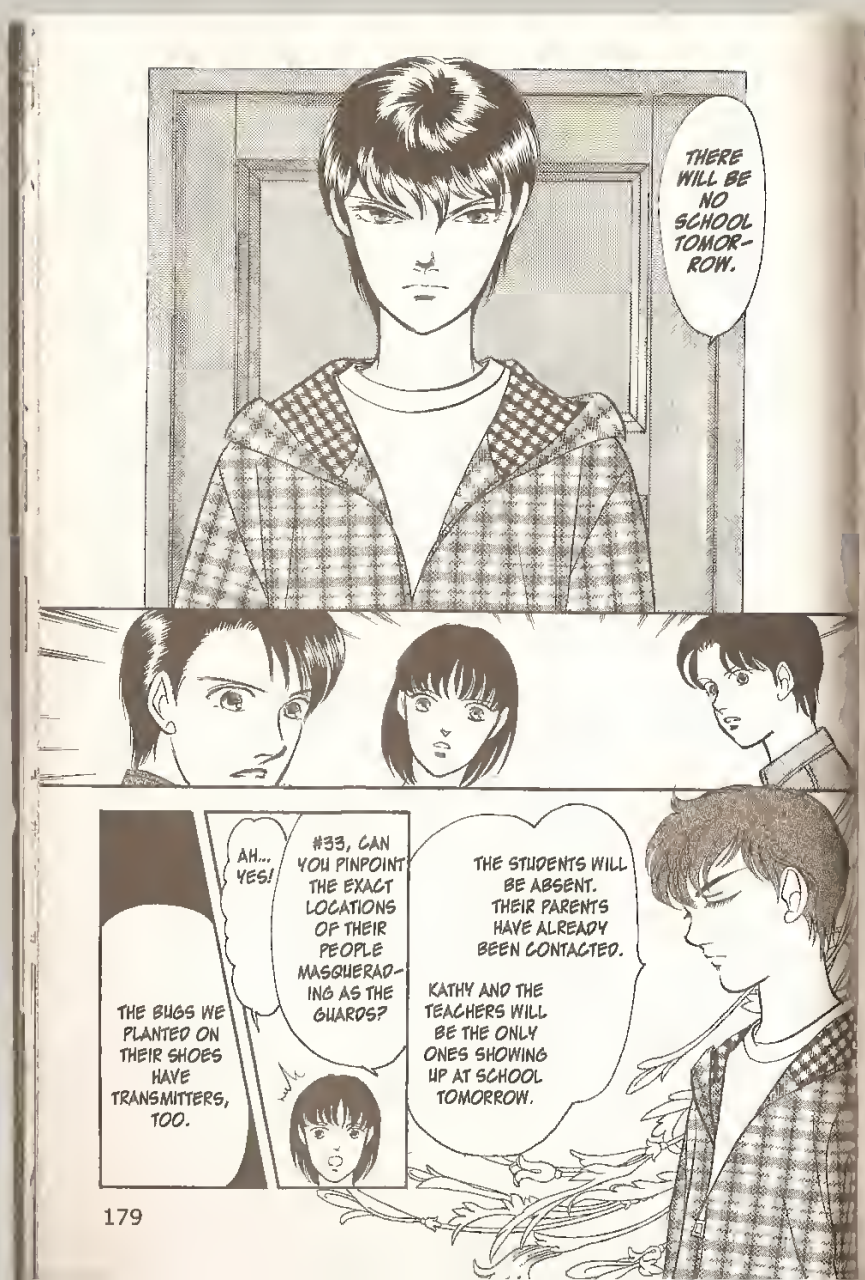

WOULD YOU MIND IF I SAT NEXT TO YOU?
EX-CUSE ME.

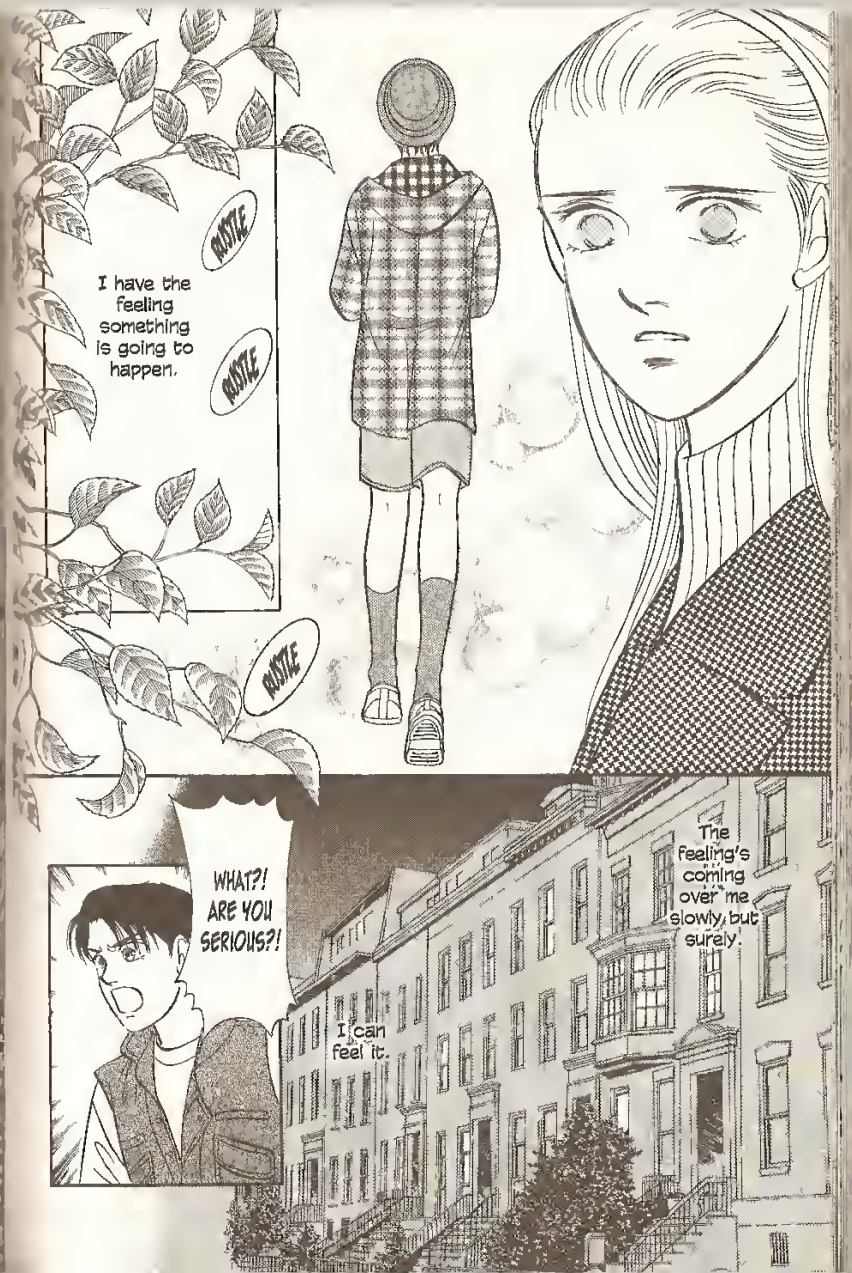

IT WON'T BE FOR MUCH LONGER.
UH-HUH.
ARE YOU OKAY?
Alone.
OOPS.
CLANG

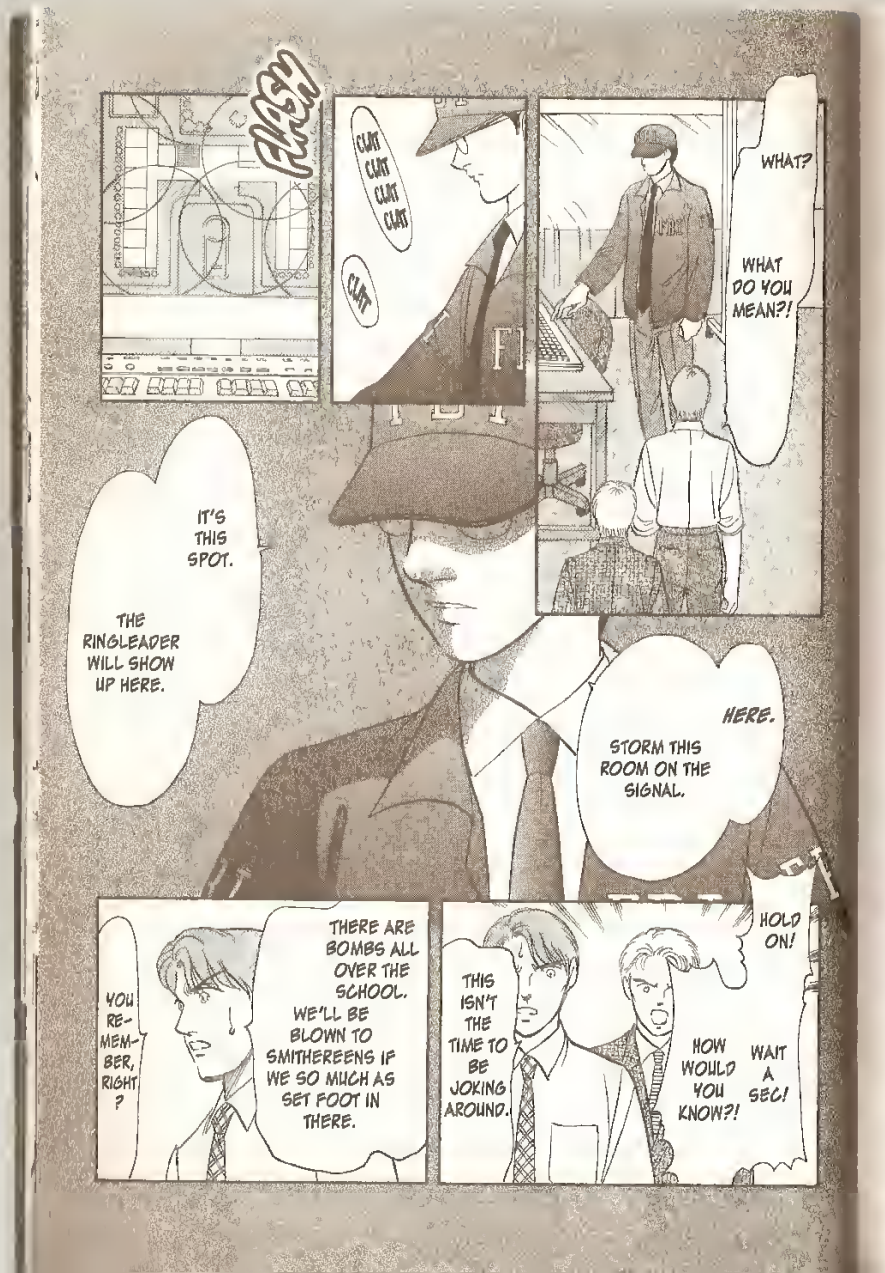

THAT'S NOT WHAT I WAS TALKING ABOUT.
Embarrassed about?
ALL I COULD THINK ABOUT WAS GETTING YOU TO THE DOCTOR.
I WAS PANICKING THEN.
RELAX, I DIDN'T APPLY ANY FIRST AID OR ANYTHING.
SO THERE'S NOTHING TO BE EMBARRASSED ABOUT.


I'M SORRY FOR ASKING SUCH AN AWKWARD QUESTION.
Good. He didn't notice anything.
OH.


Why am I feeling so let down, then? It might have been dangerous if he noticed.
I have to face this alone.
He didn't notice.
YEAH.
I HAVE TO GO NOW, SO SEE YOU.
IT'S OKAY.


THERE WILL BE NO SCHOOL TOMOR-ROW.
THE BUGS WE PLANTED ON THEIR SHOES HAVE TRANSMITTERS, TOO.
AH... YES!
#33, CAN YOU PINPOINT THE EXACT LOCATIONS OF THEIR PEOPLE MASQUERAD-ING AS THE GUARDS?
THE STUDENTS WILL BE ABSENT. THEIR PARENTS HAVE ALREADY BEEN CONTACTED.
KATHY AND THE TEACHERS WILL BE THE ONLY ONES SHOWING UP AT SCHOOL TOMORROW.


RUSTLE
I have the feeling something is going to happen.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
WHAT?! ARE YOU SERIOUS?!
I can feel it.
The feeling's coming over me slowly, but surely.


CLACK CLACK CLACK CLACK
CLACK
WHAT?
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?!
IT'S THIS SPOT.
THE RINGLEADER WILL SHOW UP HERE.
HERE.
STORM THIS ROOM ON THE SIGNAL.
YOU RE-MEM-BER, RIGHT?
THERE ARE BOMBS ALL OVER THE SCHOOL. WE'LL BE BLOWN TO SMITHEREENS IF WE SO MUCH AS SET FOOT IN THERE.
THIS ISN'T THE TIME TO BE JOKING AROUND.
HOLD ON!
HOW WOULD YOU KNOW?!
WAIT A SEC!


ANOTHER TEAM WILL SIMULTANEOUSLY TAKE THEIR OUTSIDE TEAM OUT.
AND WHEN THAT'S OVER?
#23 IS ARRANGING FOR THE F.B.I. TO STORM THE SCHOOL.
TAKE THEM OUT IN ONE SWEEP TOMORROW.
FBI


DON'T WORRY ABOUT THAT.
EVERY ONE OF THE SCHOOL'S BOMBS HAS BEEN DEACTIVATED.
DASH
YEAH, RIGHT! WHO'RE YOU KIDDING?!
FLASH
TAKE A LOOK AT THIS.
WHAT'S THE MATTER?
THIRD CAMERA. TOP CORNER.
WE HACKED INTO THEIR LINES. THAT'S WHAT THEY'RE SEEING.
182
IT'S THE SAME SHAPE.
IT'S THE SAME SHAPE.
FLASH
THE SPIDER WEB?
THIS IS YESTER-DAY.
YOU SWITCHED THE IMAGE?
YOU'D HAVE TO DO THAT FROM THE INSIDE.
BUT THERE'S NO ONE LIKE THAT INSIDE.
THAT'S IMPOS-SIBLE.
HOW?
GRAV
183

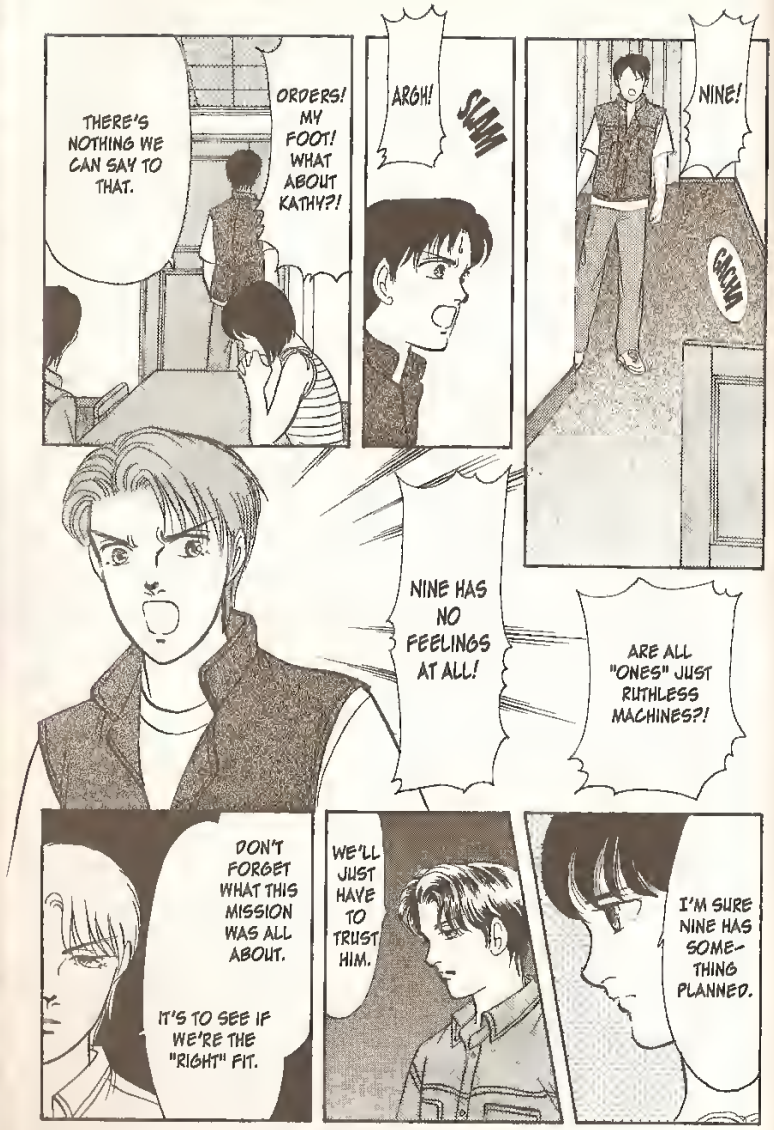

I'M GOING TO WALK OUT THIS DOOR.
FBI
SHUT
YOU'LL NEVER SEE ME AGAIN.
IT'S ALL YOURS NOW.
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
RUSTLE
WAIT A SECOND!


FBI
NOBODY SUSPECTS THEM.
PEOPLE WHO DON'T SEEM IT HAVE BEEN ON THE INSIDE FOR SEVERAL DAYS NOW.
BUT THEY'RE THE BEST OF THE BEST.
WHO ARE THEY?
AND YOU?
WHO-- OR WHAT-- ARE YOU?
THE DEAL IS--YOU DON'T ASK.
I WILL SAY THIS MUCH, THOUGH.
IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME, YOU CAN ASK THE DIRECTOR OF THE F.B.I.
THINK OF THE ORDER TO STORM THE SCHOOL TOMORROW AS A PRESIDENTIAL ORDER.


THE F.B.I. IS GOING TO STORM THE SCHOOL TOMOR-ROW?!
FORGET IT!
SURE, THE BOMBS AROUND THE SCHOOL HAVE BEEN DEFUSED--
--BUT KATHY STILL HAS THAT BOMB WRAPPED AROUND HER!
I DON'T WANT TO THINK IT, BUT...
SHE'S ALWAYS ON THE MOVE AND UNDER SURVEILLANCE.
THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN DO ABOUT HERS.
THAT GIRL AND A FEW TEACHERS.
WE CAN LIMIT THE COLLATERAL DAMAGE TO THOSE FEW.
IT'S ALL FOR NOTHING IF PEOPLE GET KILLED!
THIS MISSION WAS ABOUT SAVING HER!
IF SHE GETS KILLED, THE MISSION'S A FAILURE!
<SIGH>
ULTIMATE BLUE IS NOT ALLOWED TO MAKE MISTAKES!
THAT'S AN ORDER.


I'M NOT SURE IF WE COULD TAKE THE DETONATOR AWAY FROM HIM BEFORE HE PUSHES IT.
IF WE FAIL, KATHY IS...
NO.
THAT'S TOO RISKY.
YOUR JOB IS TO MAKE SURE THE RINGLEADER HEADS INTO THAT ROOM.
THE LEADER WILL PANIC IF NONE OF THE STUDENTS SHOW AND CONTACT WITH THE MEN IS LOST.
NINE, I THINK IT'S --
ARE YOU SAYING YOU CAN'T LISTEN TO A 13-YEAR-OLD?
(SIGH)


ORDERS FROM ABOVE ARE FINAL.
YOU OPERATE UNDER MY COMMAND.
#23'S CALCULATIONS SHOW THERE IS JUST ONE SPOT NOT WITHIN THE BLAST RADII OF THE SCHOOL'S BOMBS.
THE RINGLEADER WILL MAKE A RUN FOR THAT SPOT BEFORE PUSHING THE DETONATOR.
BUT NINE --!
OUR REAL MISSION IS TO CATCH THE RING-LEADER.

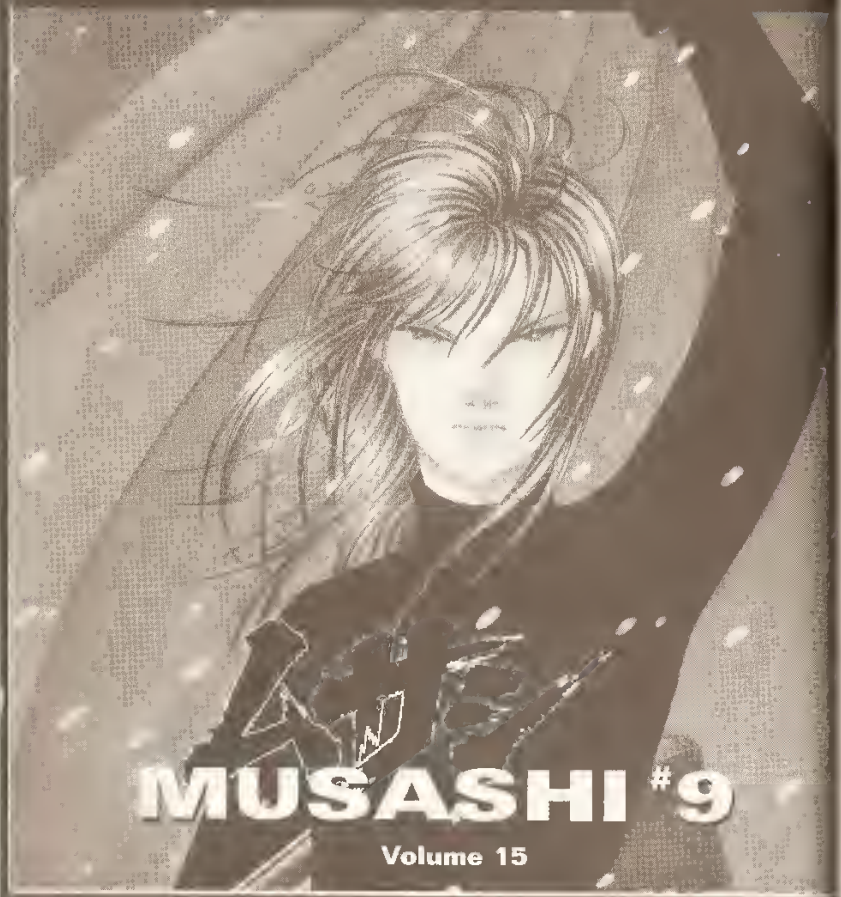

THERE'S NOTHING WE CAN SAY TO THAT.
ORDERS! MY FOOT! WHAT ABOUT KATHY?!
ARGH!
SLAM!
NINE!
CRASH
NINE HAS NO FEELINGS AT ALL!
ARE ALL "ONES" JUST RUTHLESS MACHINES?!
DON'T FORGET WHAT THIS MISSION WAS ALL ABOUT.
IT'S TO SEE IF WE'RE THE "RIGHT" FIT.
WE'LL JUST HAVE TO TRUST HIM.
I'M SURE NINE HAS SOMETHING PLANNED.


THEN FOLLOW MY ORDERS.
THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN!
IF YOU HAVE ANY FAITH IN ME, EXECUTE ACCORDING TO PLAN.
IS THAT CLEAR?


I'LL FOLLOW THEM ALL RIGHT!
YOU'RE GOING TO DISOBEY ORDERS?
BUT IN MY OWN WAY!
RUSTLE RUSTLE RUSTLE
THEN?-ONE...?
WAIT!


IT'S A TEST TO DETERMINE WHETHER WE'RE FIT TO BE NINE'S DOUBLES.
THIS IS MAKE OR BREAK.
FORGET IT!
I DON'T CARE IF I FAIL!
I HAVE NO INTENTIONS OF BEING A DOUBLE FOR SOME COLD, HEARTLESS MONSTER!
SOME TEST! LIVES ARE AT STAKE HERE!

MUSASHI REVEALS HER WEAKNESS IN JUNE!

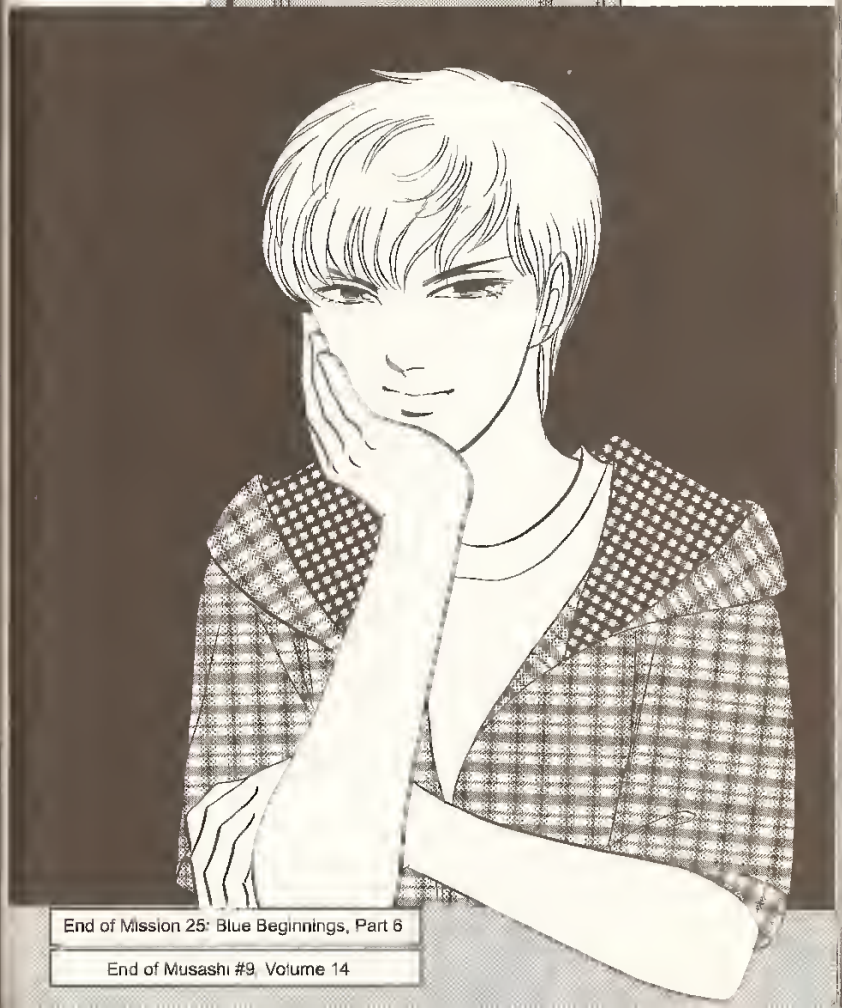


MUSASHI #9

Volume 15

By Miyuki Takahashi. Shingo learns more about the early days of Musashi #9. Ultimate Blue Agent 21 was stunned to discover the legendary Nine was a girl—a girl who admitted she didn't understand people very well. #21 recounts how he helped her learn how to relate to people emotionally, a job made exponentially more difficult when the Russian mafia tries to wipe them out.

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End of Mission 25: Blue Beginnings, Part 6

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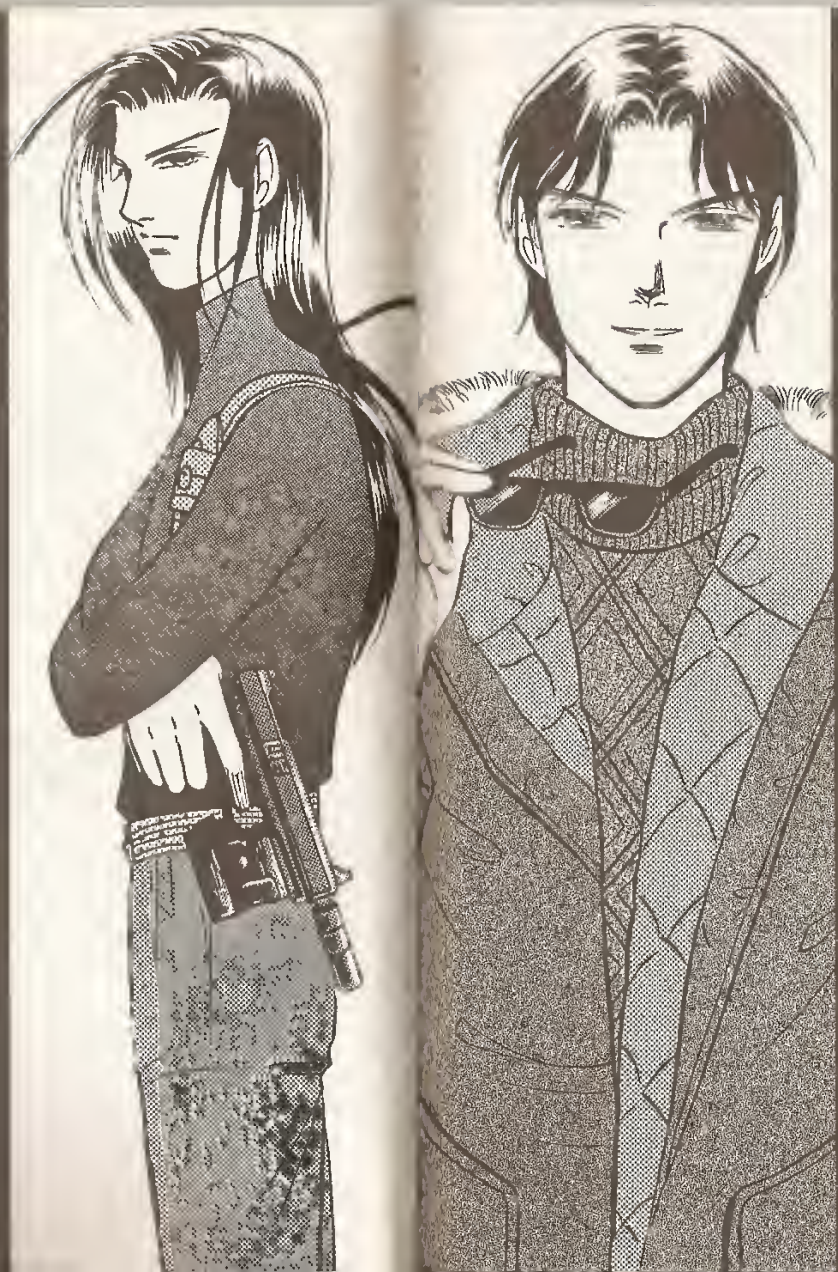
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